

AUGUST
1924
15c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure



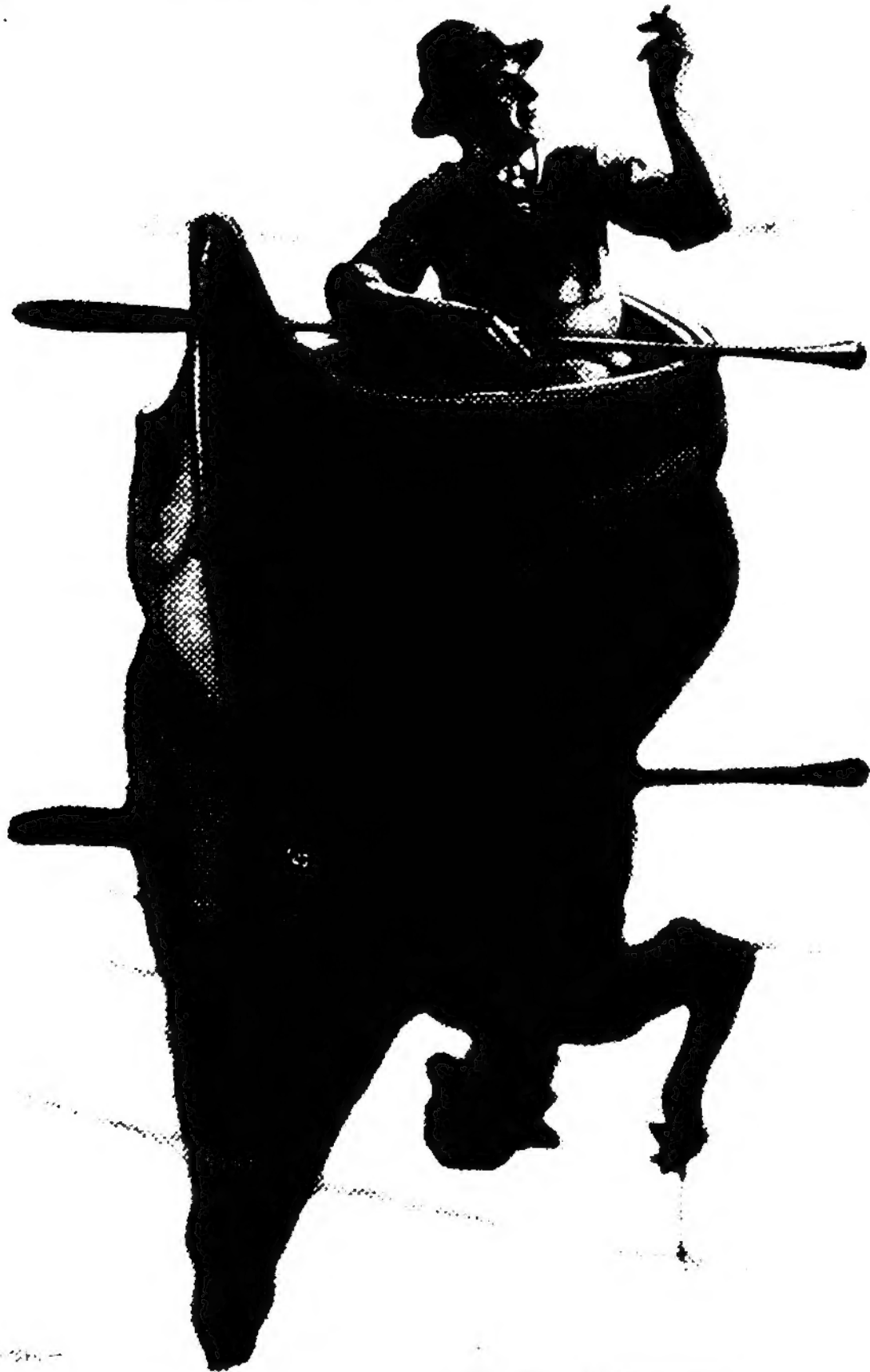
OCT 28 1921

John I. Cochrane
John Walmsley
Arthur D. Howden Smith
Gerald Huntoon
Hugh Pendexter
Alex McLaren
George E. Holt
Mortimer Batten
John Scarry

Complete Novel
Complete Novelette



**“What a whale of a difference
just a few cents make!”**



**—all the difference
between just an ordinary cigarette
and—FATIMA, the most skillful
blend in cigarette history.**



If father did the washing just once!

If every father did the family washing next Monday there would be an electric washing machine in every home before next Saturday night.

For fathers are used to figuring costs. They'd say: "The electricity for a week's washing costs less than a cake of soap. Human time and strength are too precious for work which a machine can do so cheaply and well."



You will find this monogram of the General Electric Company on many devices that take the drudgery out of housework. Look at it closely and remember the letters G-E. They are a symbol of service—the initials of a friend.

GENERAL ELECTRIC



“Another \$50 Raise!”

“Why, that’s the third increase I’ve had in a year! It shows what special training will do for a man.”

Every mail brings letters from some of the thousands of students of the International Correspondence Schools, telling of advancements won through spare-time study.

How much longer are you going to wait before taking the step that is bound to bring you more money? Isn’t it better to start now than to wait for years and then realize what the delay has cost you?

One hour after supper each night spent with the I. C. S. in your own home will prepare you for the position you want in the work you like best.

Without cost, without obligation, mark and mail this coupon. *Do it right now!*

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2042-D, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Business Management | ☐ Salesmanship |
| ☐ Industrial Management | ☐ Advertising |
| ☐ Personnel Organization | ☐ Better Letters |
| ☐ Traffic Management | ☐ Show Card Lettering |
| ☐ Business Law | ☐ Stenography and Typing |
| ☐ Banking and Banking Law | ☐ Business English |
| ☐ Accountancy (Including C.P.A.) | ☐ Civil Service |
| ☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting | ☐ Railway Mail Clerk |
| ☐ Bookkeeping | ☐ Common School Subjects |
| ☐ Private Secretary | ☐ High School Subjects |
| ☐ Spanish ☐ French | ☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning |

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Electrical Engineering | ☐ Architect |
| ☐ Electric Lighting | ☐ Architects' Blue Prints |
| ☐ Mechanical Engineer | ☐ Contractor and Builder |
| ☐ Mechanical Draftsman | ☐ Architectural Draftsman |
| ☐ Machine Shop Practice | ☐ Concrete Builder |
| ☐ Railroad Positions | ☐ Structural Engineer |
| ☐ Gas Engine Operating | ☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy |
| ☐ Civil Engineer | ☐ Automobile Work |
| ☐ Surveying and Mapping | ☐ Airplane Engines |
| ☐ Metallurgy | ☐ Navigation |
| ☐ Steam Engineering | ☐ Agriculture and Poultry |
| ☐ Radio | ☐ Mathematics |

Name.....
Street.....
Address.....
City..... State.....

Occupation.....
Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

New England CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

BOSTON, MASS.

George W. Chadwick
Director

Year Opened
September 18, 1924

Located in the Music Center of America

It affords pupils the environment and atmosphere so necessary to a musical education. Its complete organization, and splendid equipment, offer exceptional facilities for students.
Dormitories for women students.

Complete Curriculum

Courses in every branch of Music, applied and theoretical.

Owing to the Practical Training

In our Normal Department, graduates are much in demand as teachers.

The Free Privileges

Of lectures, concerts and recitals, the opportunities of ensemble practice and appearing before audiences, and the daily associations are invaluable advantages to the music student.

A Complete Orchestra

Offers advanced pupils in piano-forte, voice, organ and violin experience in rehearsal and public appearance with orchestral accompaniment.

Dramatic Department

Practical training in acting.

Address Ralph L. Flanders, General Manager

Have EYES Like Stars

For EYES of starry brightness, use **MURINE**. This harmless lotion clears the whites of the EYES and imparts new life and sparkle. Delightfully refreshing after reading, sewing, business, motoring and all outdoor sports.

Write **Murine Company, Dept. 61,**
Chicago, for **FREE Eye Care Book**

MURINE
FOR YOUR EYES
Widely Used Since 1889

BUCHSTEIN'S FIBRE LIMB



is soothing to your stump,—
strong, cool, neat, light.
Guaranteed 5 years.
Easy payments.

Also fibre arms, and
braces for all deformities
A. Buchstein Co., 610 3rd Ave., S. Minneapolis, Minn.
Original from

Send
for
Catalog
Today



Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President

Spring and Macdougall Streets
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

New York, N. Y.
New York, N. Y.

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the
Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, \$6.00 in advance

Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, \$3.00 additional. Canadian postage, 90 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1924, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. Entered at
Stationers' Hall, London, England.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while
they are in his hands.

Contents for August 20th, 1924, Issue

Blackbeard and the Texas Kid <i>A Complete Novel</i>	John I. Cochrane	1
New York—the doctor who packed the wallop.		
One Moorish Sultan <i>A Bit of History</i>	G. E. H.	86
Sir Mellivora	Leo Walmsley	87
Africa—it isn't safe to monkey with a honey-badger.		
Servants of the Law	H. Mortimer Batten	93
Canada—the lesson is how to learn.		
Iroquois! Iroquois! <i>A Five-Part Story Part II</i>	Hugh Pendexter	98
New York, 1775—on the trail of a killer.		
Hit Your Own Gait <i>Outdoor Life</i>	Raymond S. Spears	118
X-35, Chargé d'Affaires	Gerald C. Huntton	119
South America—hard work for the old submarine.		
The Captive	George E. Holt	126
Morocco—diplomatic abduction.		

"Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

A Rimrock Judas	Alex McLaren	133
West—they tried to frame <i>Shorty</i> , but——		
Lee Shore Verse	Harold Willard Gleason	140
Djongos	John Scarry	141
Borneo—only an orang-utan saw the killing.		
Indians and Eagle Feathers	Aboriginal Customs	Alanson Skinner
Swain's Payment	A Complete Novelette	Arthur D. Howden Smith
Norway—the viking hews a path for a king.		
The Camp-Fire	A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers	175
Camp-Fire Stations		182
Lost Trails		183
Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader		183
Ask Adventure		184
A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising sixty-three geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons Past and Present, Salt and Fresh Water Fishing, Tropical Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, United States and Foreign; and American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal.		
Old Songs That Men Have Sung		191
The Trail Ahead		192
Headings		V. E. Pyles
Cover Design		H. C. Murphy

One Complete Novel, Two Complete Novelettes

AS SHERIFF of Sun Dog County, "*Brick*" Davidson had to contend with hold-up men and tough characters of all descriptions. But it was the respectable citizens, notably the bank president, who caused him the most trouble. "*SUN DOG LOOT*," by W. C. Tuttle, is the complete novel in the next issue.

BROKE and fever-stricken, *Heaton* watched for the coming of the killer. When he saw a white figure leave the steamer at sunset he quickly followed it, and they met in the dark on a lonely stretch of beach. "*THE GUNMAN AT GOORABAYA*," a complete novelette by Frederick Moore in the next issue.

SEA-OTTERS made rich spoil on the islands off Alaska in the eighteenth century and the rival Russian companies who sent their ships out after them demanded results—at any cost. "*FAIR WEATHER FRIENDS*," in our next issue, is William Byron Mowery's first complete novelette.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

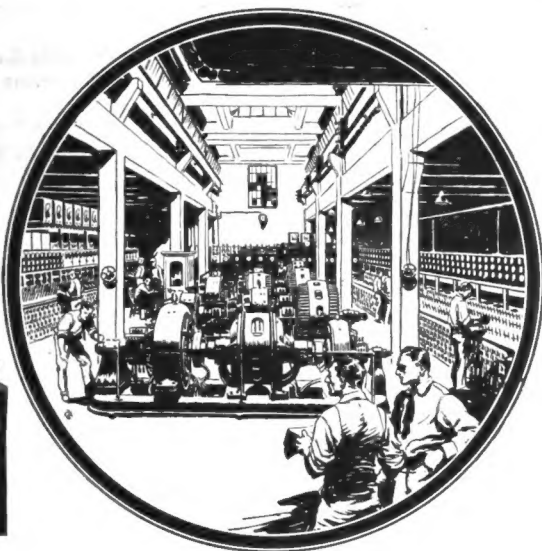
Adventure is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month



*The Sign of
"Friendly Service"*

Service Stations
Everywhere

Generating Cur-
rent for Charging
Prest-O-Lite
Batteries at the
Speedway Plant.



Your Car Is No Better Than Its Battery

That is so evident that it is foolish to take chances by getting a replacement battery that has no earned reputation for dependability—

An unknown battery is just a battery—it brings you no assurance of performance.

The name Prest-O-Lite on a battery means dependability; it means a battery made by a great organization that has built up a high reputation for integrity of product and character of service.

Prest-O-Lite could not afford to put its name on a faulty product...—which is your assurance of satisfactory performance.

Prest-O-Lite costs no more.



THE PREST-O-LITE COMPANY, INC.
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

New York: 30 East 42nd Street

Pacific Coast: 599 Eighth Street, San Francisco

In Canada: Prest-O-Lite Company of Canada, Ltd., Toronto

Prest-O-Lite

THE OLDEST SERVICE TO MOTORISTS

For your Radio get
assured performance
in the Prest-O-
Lite Radio Battery.



Only One in Five escapes Pyorrhea

Will that one be you?
Be sure—use Forhan's

Dental statistics tell the story. Four out of five over forty years—and thousands younger—are victims of Pyorrhea.

Apply the "ounce of prevention" before Nature warns with bleeding gums. Go to your dentist regularly. And brush your teeth at least twice a day with Forhan's For the Gums.

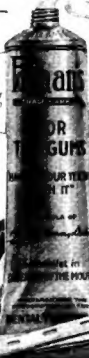
If used in time and used consistently, this safe, pleasant-tasting dentifrice will help prevent Pyorrhea or check its progress. It will keep your mouth clean and fresh, preserve your teeth and safeguard your health. Ask your dentist. At all druggists, 35c and 60c.

Forhan's

FOR THE GUMS

More than a tooth paste—
it checks Pyorrhea

Prepared by
R. J. Forhan, D.D.S.
Forhan Company
New York, N.Y.



THE VALUE OF CHARCOAL

Few People Know How Useful it is in Preserving Health and Beauty.

Nearly everybody knows that charcoal is the safest and most efficient disinfectant and purifier in nature, but few realize its value when properly prepared and taken into the human system for the same cleansing purpose.

Charcoal is a remedy that the more you take of it the better; it is not a drug at all, but simply absorbs the gases and impurities always present in the stomach and intestines and carries them out of the system.

Charcoal sweetens the breath after smoking, and after eating onions and other odorous vegetables.

Charcoal effectually clears and improves the complexion, it whitens the teeth and further acts as a natural and eminently safe cathartic.

It absorbs the injurious gases which collect in the stomach and bowels; it disinfects the mouth and throat from the poison of catarrh.

All druggists sell charcoal in one form or another, but probably the best charcoal and the most for the money is in Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges; they are composed of the finest quality Willow charcoal powdered to extreme fineness, then compressed in tablet form or rather in the form of large, pleasant tasting lozenges, the charcoal being sweetened to be smooth and palatable.

The daily use of these lozenges will soon tell in a much improved condition of the general health, better complexion, sweeter breath and purer blood, and the beauty of it is that no possible harm can result from their continued use, but on the contrary, great benefit.

Many physicians advise Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges to patients suffering from gas in stomach and bowels, and to clear the complexion and purify the breath, mouth and throat. They are also believed to greatly benefit the liver. These lozenges cost but thirty cents a box at drug stores. For a free trial send your name and address to F. A. Stuart Co., 1 Stuart Bldg., Marshall, Mich. You get more and better charcoal in Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges than in any of the ordinary charcoal tablets.

FRECKLES

Now Is the Time to Get Rid of
These Ugly Spots

There's no longer the slightest need of feeling ashamed of your freckles, as Othine—double strength—is guaranteed to remove these homely spots.

Simply get an ounce of Othine from any druggist and apply a little of it night and morning and you should soon see that even the worst freckles have begun to disappear, while the lighter ones have vanished entirely. It is seldom that more than an ounce is needed to completely clear the skin and gain a beautiful, clear complexion.

Be sure to ask for double-strength Othine, as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.

Make \$75⁰⁰ a Week and up

Make \$75.00 a week and up, selling our fine made-to-measure, all-wool suits, direct to wearer. Biggest values—positively sell on sight. Biggest commissions paid in advance. We attend to delivery and collections. 6x9 swatch samples—over 100 styles all one price—furnished FREE. Part or full time men write at once.

W. Z. Gibson, Inc., 161 W. Harrison St., Dept. LH-33, Chicago

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG

We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big song-hits. Submit your song-poem to us at once. NEW YORK MELODY CORP., 401-J Romax Bldg., New York.



*The Charm
of a healthy skin—
follow the Fairy way!*

A normal, healthy, vigorous skin has a charm no cosmetic can hope to rival! And first of all, skin health means cleanliness.

Keep clean the Fairy way! See how simple and easy it is to retain that youthful, velvety skin by using a pure white soap!

Fairy Soap is the world's whitest soap.

Of course it's perfectly pure. And it really clears the pores, leaving the skin fresh and invigorated.

Fairy Soap cleanses with delicacy. Makes a smooth, gently soothing lather that's balm to sensitive skins. The handy oval cake for toilet or bath. Lasts longer than ordinary soaps because it wears to a thin wafer.

It's white! It's pure! It floats!

FAIRY SOAP



Shawknit

TRADE MARK
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

FINE HOSIERY

BEFORE you leave the city make sure that you have those cool, airy but strongly woven TS Numbers of Shawknit Silks. To spend a vacation in them is equalled only by the satisfaction over what you spent for them.

SHAW STOCKING CO.
Lowell, Mass.

\$3 DOWN Brings you a Genuine UNDERWOOD TYPEWRITER

10 DAYS FREE TRIAL Your \$3.00 unconditionally returned if at end of 10 days you are not satisfied with this late model UNDERWOOD typewriter rebuilt by the famous Shipman Ward process.

GREAT PRICE SAVING Direct to you from the largest typewriter factory in the world by our money saving methods.

EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS So small that you will not notice it while you enjoy the use of this wonderful machine.

FREE BOOK OF FACTS Explaining Shipman Ward's wonderful system of rebuilding typewriters and also valuable information about the typewriter industry both instructive and entertaining.

**Act Today!
Mail
Coupon**



**5
Year
Guarantee**

Shipman Ward
Mfg. Company
C263 Shipman Building
Montrose & Ravenswood
Aves., Chicago

Name.....
St. and No.....
City..... State.....

Please send me a copy of your free book of facts, explaining bargain offer.

YOU TOO CAN PLAY THE HAWAIIAN GUITAR JUST AS THE HAWAIIANS DO! PLAY ALL THE LATEST HITS

After Your FIRST LESSON You Will Play a Complete Selection. We Guarantee That--

Our method is so simple, interesting and appealing that you begin in your first lesson to learn the famous Hawaiian Folk Song "ALOHA". Think how happy you will be when you surprise your friends by playing the fascinating Hawaiian Guitar.



Only Four Motions-- and You Master Them Quickly!

In a few minutes you acquire the four motions necessary to play any piece-- after that a short period of practice and you will have mastered this wildly sweet music. Complete course of 52 lessons includes FREE beautiful Hawaiian Guitar, necessary picks, steel bar, etc. No extras.

No Previous Musical Knowledge Necessary
If you never read a musical note in your life--if you haven't even the slightest knowledge of music, we can quickly and positively teach you to play this wonderfully popular instrument. Don't be just a "Hawaiian" when you can easily be the center of interest among your friends. Over 40,000 successful students.

Just Mail a Post Card for Details of our remarkable FREE Hawaiian Guitar Offer--simply write: "I am interested"--but do it today.

First Hawaiian Conservatory of Music, Inc.
Desk 24, 233 11th Ave.
(Woolworth Bldg.)
New York City

FREE
A Beautiful
Hawaiian
Guitar

Antique and Modern Arms

Arrows.....	\$1.00 up	War medals.....	\$ 3.00 up
Zulu shields.....	\$8.50	Flint pistols.....	\$ 4.20
African spears.....	\$5.00	Blunderbusses.....	\$15.00
Dirks.....	\$5.00	Arrowheads, set	\$ 1.00

Illustrated reference catalog, 372 pages, issue 1922, mailed 50 cents. New Circular for 2 ct. stamp.

Established 1865

Francis Bannerman Sons, 501 Broadway, New York

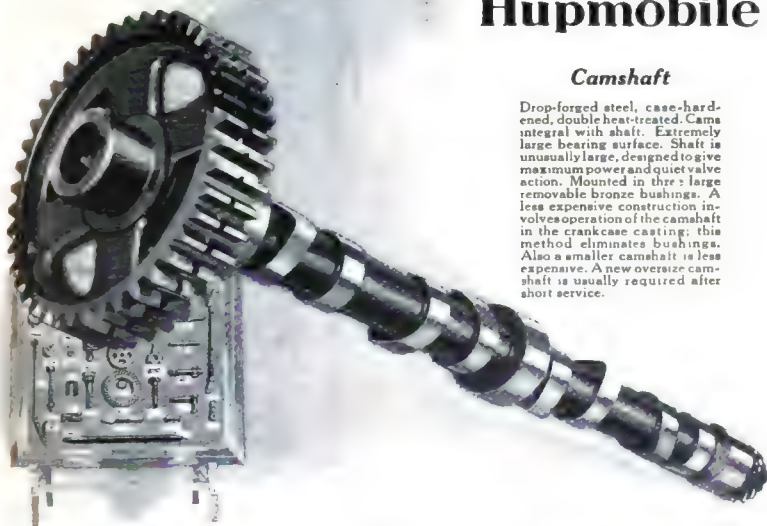
FORD RUNS 57 MILES ON A GALLON OF GASOLINE

A new automatic and self-regulating device has been invented by John A. Stransky, 2571 Fourth St., Pukwana, S. Dakota, with which automobiles have made from 40 to 57 m. on a gallon of gasoline. It removes all carbon and prevents spark plug trouble and overheating. It can be installed anyone in five minutes. Mr. Stransky wants agents and is willing to send a sample at his own risk. Write him today.

Hupmobile

Camshaft

Drop-forged steel, case-hardened, double heat-treated. Cam integral with shaft. Extremely large bearing surface. Shaft is unusually large, designed to give maximum power and quiet valve action. Mounted in three large removable bronze bushings. A less expensive construction involves operation of the camshaft in the crankcase casting; this method eliminates bushings. Also a smaller camshaft is less expensive. A new oversize camshaft is usually required after short service.



Prove to Yourself That You Can't Get A Better Car Than Hupmobile

Many a man has made a poor automobile purchase because there was no way for him to protect himself.

But there is a way now—a positive way.

How To Be Sure of Your Car

Hupmobile has introduced a new and better element into automobile selling. A sales policy that is as sound and practical as the car itself.

Hupmobile takes all the mystery out of automobile specifications and makes them a very real buying help.

Hupmobile asks you to check the parts in its construction against any car, of any make, at any price.

To check the parts for quality of materials, and for fineness of processing and fabrication.

You will prove to yourself conclusively that there is no better made car than Hupmobile.

Our word for it—Hupmobile is the car for you to buy.

It gives you comfort, luxury, riding and driving ease, an extraordinary verve and pickup, endurance beyond all comparison; thousands and thousands of miles of care-free use; and then a high resale value. And there is a rock-bottom basis for all that.

How to Prove Hupmobile Facts

For we say to you that no car at or near its price can surpass Hupmobile in quality of materials and fineness of manufacturing. Check the parts and prove it for yourself.

Why look around further?—your good sense will tell you that the Hupmobile is the car you ought to buy. Buy it now—you'll be glad of it in the years to come.

Hupp Motor Car Corporation

Detroit, Michigan



Let the children
have all the
Beeman's
they want—
it's healthful
and tasty—
its use is

*"a sensible
habit"*



BEEMAN'S
Pepsin Gum 

AMERICAN CHICLE CO.

Stop Using a Truss



Reduced
Fac-Simile
Gold Medal

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being mechanico-chemico applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. No straps, buckles or spring attached—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. Awarded



Reduced
Fac-Simile
Grand Prix

Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely FREE. Write name on Coupon and send TODAY.

Plapao Co., 633 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Name

Address

Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every Owner **Says** Gold Initials for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples.

AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 86, East Orange, N. J.

Cincinnati's finest hotel is just the sort of place you would like your mother or wife or sister or daughter to stay.

It affords all the little niceties of service and appointments which particular people are used to enjoying at home and do not get in the average hotel.

Hotel Sinton

*the hotel of character
in the city of character.*

CINCINNATI

Accommodations for 1200 Guests
Every Room with Bath and Servidor

Management John L. Horgan

NO MYSTERY!

You can be

**HEALTHY—SUCCESSFUL—
SUPREMELY HAPPY**

There is *one* real basis, for the cure of all ills, physical or mental. Would you like to know what it is?—and in a way that does not conflict with your *religion and common sense*. WRITE ME. NO OBLIGATION.

ALLAN GOLDSMITH

Dept. G, Suite 714

22-24 East Park St.,

Newark, New Jersey



BUNIONS

PEDODYNE, the marvelous new Solvent, banishes Bunions. The pain stops almost instantly. The Hump vanishes as though by magic. THEN YOU WILL HAVE SHAPELY FEET.

SENT ON TRIAL

I want you to have relief from Bunions. I want you to know the pleasure of foot comfort. I will gladly arrange to send you a box of Solvent to try. Simply write and say, "I want to try PEDODYNE." Address—

KAY LABORATORIES, Dept. K-933

186 N. La Salle St.

Chicago, Illinois

Big Money Writing photoplays, stories, poems, songs. Send for free copy America's greatest magazine for writers. Tells you how to write and sell. **WRITER'S DIGEST, 607 Butler Building, Cincinnati, Ohio**

Kindly mention Adventure in writing to advertisers or visiting your dealer.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Here's \$200 a Week

for any Man or Woman and a Special Offer for Quick Action-Grab it

I KNOW that there are thousands of men and women who are interested right now in making more money. They want immediate action—without red tape, and without delay. Now I am going to make a personal, special offer that will enable any man or woman to make from \$100 to \$200 a week, depending upon how much time is devoted to my proposition.

How Much Can You Make?

I want a man or woman in each community to act as my representative—to call on my customers and take their orders for raincoats. That's all there is to it. If you take four average orders a day I will pay you \$96 a week. If you take only one average order a day you will make about \$24 a week, and that is easy. Hundreds of my representatives are earning that much just in their spare time. For instance, George Garon made \$40 clear profit his first day. And there is Harry Swartz of Pennsylvania, whose commissions on one day were \$66. And W. S. Cooper, who has averaged over \$5,000 a year for six years, working only four hours a day. Just read the records of a few of my representatives—on the right hand side of this page—and you will realize that it is amazingly easy for a man to make from \$100 to \$200 a week at this proposition.

No Experience Is Needed

It is not necessary for you to have been a salesman. You do not need any previous knowledge about raincoats. I will give you all the information you will ever need. There is no trick to taking orders for Comer All-Weather Coats and the reason is simply this—they are such big bargains that they sell themselves. People like to buy direct from the factory, for the money saved by this method of selling is passed on to the customer.

We manufacture our own coats and sell them direct to our customers by parcel post. Our representatives simply take orders. The values speak for themselves—and with such values, such styles, such materials as we offer, our representatives often take from 2 to 4 orders at a single call.

And because Comer Coats are such big values and sell so easily, E. A. Sweet of Michigan made \$1,200 in a single month—Spencer earned \$625 in one month's spare time—McCrory increased his earnings from \$2 a day to \$9,000 a year.

This Is All You Have to Do

All that my representatives do is take orders—and they get their money immediately. If your profit for one day is \$10, you will have that \$10 in cash the same day. You don't carry a stock of coats. You don't put up any money. You don't deliver anything, and I do my own collecting through the mail.

Accept My Special Offer

Now—the important thing is to get started. I know that you can make at least \$100 within one week of today and have that \$100 in cash. I know that within a short time you can be making \$200 a week—every week. The important thing is to get started, and get started quick. If you will fill out the coupon with your name and address, I will send you, without any preliminary correspondence, and with absolutely no deposit whatever on your part, a complete selling outfit with full instructions, samples of raincoat material, style book, order blanks, and everything that you will need to make money. I will write you a letter that is so complete, clear and concise that after you read it you will know absolutely where to go, what to say, and how to make money.

Within the past few weeks I have paid my representatives hundreds of thousands of dollars. And I am willing to make this concession to you—send you the complete outfit, confidential information and instructions at once. So if you are one of those men or women who want a real opportunity to establish a big, permanent, substantial and profitable business—if you are sincere and earnest in your desire to make more money, sign and mail the coupon at once. In less than a week you will be making more money than you ever thought possible.

C. E. COMER, The Comer Mfg. Co.

Dept. SBK-73

Dayton, Ohio



J. R. HEAD

of Kansas, who lives in a small town of 631 people. He has made as high as \$69.50 in one day selling Comer All-Weather Coats.



W. S. COOPER

of Ohio, finds it easy to earn over \$500 a month selling Comer All-Weather Coats.



E. A. SWEET

an electrical engineer, is making \$600 to \$1,200 a month and works only about four hours a day.

Mail This Special Coupon Now

THE COMER MFG. CO.
Dept. SBK 73, Dayton, Ohio

Please send me, without expense or obligation, your special proposition, together with complete outfit and instructions, so I can begin at once to earn money.

Name.....

Address.....

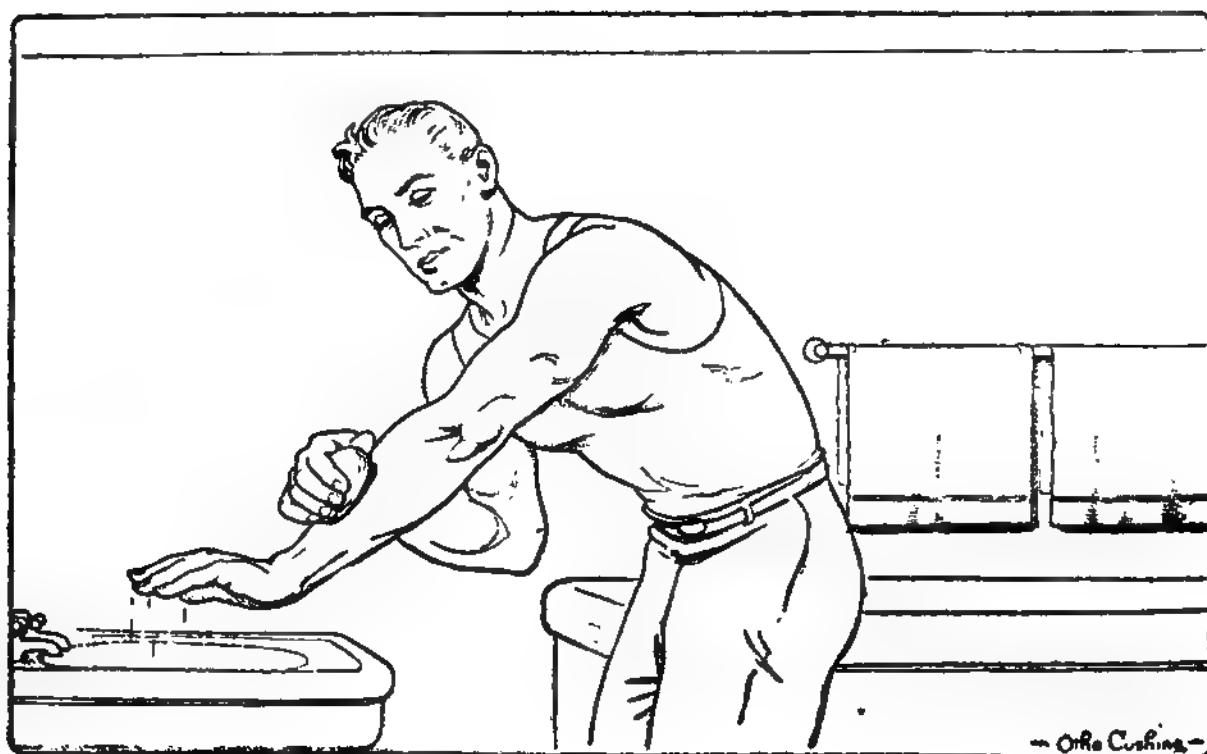
Print or write plainly



FREE

In addition to your big earnings I offer you a Buick Touring Car, without a cent of cost, that you can use to help you in developing this great business. Mail the coupon NOW.

Kindly mention Adventure in writing to advertisers or visiting your dealer.



Split-second comfort

When you see an earnest face-washer diligently massaging the soap with all the hopefulness of an eager young bond-salesman; when you see his final product, like boiled starch sparsely populated by a few orphaned bubbles, you know this for certain: his soap is not Ivory.

No! With the same effort the Ivoried man would have about a pint of thick, rich, pearly-white lather, lather that ingratiates itself into every pore and gets a warm welcome from everything but dirt.

Now watch your Ivoryless man

when he gets to the rinsing stage. As dash after dash of water fails to remove the oiled rubber feeling from his skin, he yields to discouragement and hands the job to the over-worked towel. You know what "rinsing" with a towel means—a skin that feels like owl-wagon pie-crust.

But rinsing Ivory lather is as easy and quick as holing a two-inch putt for a par four. And the face that smiles up from the stainless towel tells a story of gentle Ivory treatment in which justice has been generously tempered with mercy.

PROCTER & GAMBLE

IVORY SOAP
99⁴⁴/₁₀₀% PURE IT FLOATS

Here is news: When Guest Ivory—the handy new cake of Ivory made especially for wash-stand use—comes into the home, soap-debates subside like ripples on a quiet pool. Guest Ivory suits husbands, wives, daughters, sisters, cousins and aunts.

AUGUST 2
1924
Vol XLVIII
No. 2

Adventure



Blackbeard and the Texas Kid

A COMPLETE NOVEL by John I. Cochrane

Author of "Necklaces and Dan Wheeler," "Sled Wheeler and the Nameless Order," etc.

"**M**ARY Mother! Michael Kinney, what is it?" Deputy Warden Murphy's crisp bass sounded a note of disgust as he stared across the prison lobby, and the grizzled head keeper beside him turned to follow the direction of his gaze. Then old Kinney rumbled:

"That, Jawn, is the new penitentiary physician. He was here all day yesterda' with Doc Carson learnin' the ropes. His two big trunks come up on the *Monadnock*, and all mornin' he's been unpackin' them. And now it's you he's lookin' for, Jawn."

Still the dep gazed, and his hard, fighting face darkened at the sight. In the door from the offices stood a beautiful youth, all in snowy duck with a stethoscope round his

neck. Beautiful was the word. That was the trouble.

The new doctor was too beautiful to be efficient. He was tall and graceful, with a fine, sensitive face and large hazel eyes, and his radiant presence seemed to light up all that end of the prison. But Murphy watched him with a frown that grew heavier every instant, because in this new man's arrival he saw the death of his own hopes. For years the dep had worked toward one goal—the appointment as warden of the pen—and now when it was within reach all the hard luck in the world had dropped on him in a bunch.

Just when he was about to wind up a fortnight's interregnum as acting warden, and to do it with a flourish that would cinch his

appointment, here had come this Black-beard scare that had put the prisoners on edge—ripe for any kind of stampede. Now on top of that, here was this girl-faced dude wished on him to run the pen hospital—always the weak spot in prison administration. He could even see himself losing his present job as deputy warden.

Meanwhile the perfectly groomed youth was swinging across the stone flagging straight toward the two high officials in blue. Within reach, he addressed the leonine old head keeper in a voice strikingly low and pleasant—

"Good morning, Mr. Kinney."

And he turned toward the dep expectantly.

"Deputy Warden Murphy," Kinney growled formally. "Make ye acquainted with Dr. Stuart Sloane."

And added with intent to ease the tension—

"Doc Carson says he's a better man than himself—that's goin' some."

"Dr. Carson laid it on too thick," the new man said, then flashed a sudden smile that showed very strong, white teeth. "But really, Mr. Murphy, it's not as bad as all that. I know I look like a weak sister, but give me a fair chance and I may surprize you, so don't lose all hope yet."

Murphy was seldom at a loss for a word, but the new doctor had got inside his guard and "landed on the wind," and before the dep got breath for a reply Sloane jolted him again. He sobered as quickly and explained:

"I'm not trying to be fresh, sir. I know how you are fixed right now—that you may lose out on your appointment as warden if I fall down on the job, and the prisoners are in a mood hard to handle. I just wanted to tell you that I promised Dr. Carson to make good, and I've just naturally got it to *do*. And I wanted to ask you to back me up when it comes to sick line this morning—that is going to be the first show-down. How about it?"

The dep noticed that the young man's sensitive lips were set in a line as they closed, but he asked coldly—

"Well, what do you want me to do exactly?"

He expected a general request for a square deal, but again young Dr. Sloane surprized him by a specific demand—

"See that the 'screws'* are not grinning or nudging one another, and let me transfer as many to hospital as I want to—just this first morning, I mean. I don't intend to let this first sick line get the start of me. You see?"

"Right! You're on!" said Murphy in a crisp bark.

"Thanks. Shake!"

With another flash of the strong, white teeth the doctor gave Murphy a grip that hurt, then went on:

"There's only a half-hour before sick line now, and I want to put the Professor through signal practise. So long!"

With a running start he was off up the winding iron stairs at an easy, tireless spring. Murphy and old Kinney watched him out of sight before they turned on each other a look of black question. It was the rumbling drawl of the old warrior that broke the silence—

"Nice teeth he has, Jawn; did ye mind?"

"I did that, Michael. What is he? Anything more than the spoiled kid of some rich man—a ladies' darlin'?"

Old Kinney shook his head gravely as he growled:

"That grin, Jawn, has a 'cut-ye-heart-out' look to it. The lad will be wort' watchin'; ye hear me."

"Let's pray he can handle that hard-boiled bunch of crooks." Murphy spoke with small hopes.

"Doc Carson has put him wise, but it's up to him to prove he has the guts for the job. Nothing but a try-out will tell the story. You might pass the word to the screws to keep a straight face, as if Doc Carson was still on the job. I gave the boy my word for it."

"Very well, sorr."

With a salute old Kinney went to give the order, and Murphy paced the echoing lobby in gloomy reflection while he waited for morning review and sick line at 11:30. Trusties in their ugly, broad stripes scurried about with mops and buckets finishing the morning clean-up—now and then stealing a wistful glance out through the open door on the west, across the narrow East River to the foot of Fifty-first Street. It was through this door that a thousand men would come, in gangs of thirty, from quarry and garden when the bell rang for dinner.

As the hour approached the mess-hall

*"Screws"—keepers, warders.

door on the opposite side of the lobby swung open. Presently a fat man in specially clean stripes came rattling down the iron stairs from the hospital with a drug-box on his arm. He had a fat but alert and sensitive face, and he moved with a light briskness as he went to a table near the eastern wall, there to arrange his bottles and graduates.

With immense dignity he summoned another trusty to bring a pail of drinking-water. This was "the Professor," the drug-orderly, and he was intensely conscious of his importance. His preparations completed, he leaned one elbow on the doctor's desk near by and struck an attitude of profound thought.

The bell was ringing now, and old Kinney came back from the offices. On his way to his post near the mess-hall door he stopped midway, where Murphy had taken his stand at the end of the cell-stack, to growl:

"Devery says he never see the tiers so jumpy, not since the time we hed the jam in sick line—whin that young Feldman come over to substitute, d'ye mind?—and the crooks rushed the guar-rd. Poor Haley got a bullet in his belly in the ruckus."

The dep's face never altered a line, but he spoke with military brusqueness—

"Don't let 'em get out of line if they gang up on him!"

Shish—shish—shish—shish— came the first gritty scrape of nailed shoes as the first gang came shuffling in at the open door in close lockstep file. Belly to back, with hands on the shoulders in front, each gang swung slowly across the lobby past the dep, past old Kinney at the mess-hall door. Close after it came another. As each gang in closed file, with blue-clad keeper beside it, swung all its right legs, then all its left legs in perfect unison, it looked like a big pacing centipede. The feet ground the stones with the same monotonous—

Shish—shish—shish—shish.

By the mess-hall door, erect and leonine, stood old Kinney, where gang after gang must pass in close review. If a man in the striped line was ailing he held up his hand; Kinney nodded, and the man slipped sideways out of the lockstep file and shambled to the far end of sick line that formed along the outer wall, with its head at the doctor's high desk.

One at a time the men in sick line came up to tell their troubles to the doctor. He

heard, asked a question, clapped stethoscope to a chest and made a snap-shot diagnosis. Giving a brief order to the drug-orderly at his side, he waved the man along. When a man had swallowed his dose he moved over to a second line against the cell-stack, to be sent later to mess-hall, cell or hospital as his case required. This was "sick line."

And the measure of a doctor's success is speed. He must get action, quick and decisive action. If the last sick man—or faker—is not disposed of when the last gang has filed into the mess-hall, all the keepers are kept waiting for their dinner and all the prison machinery is thrown out of gear.

Moreover, if the sick line gets too long word is passed by signal from gang to gang to "gang up" on the doctor. Immediately every third man is taken with a cough or a pain; sick line soon reaches far down the prison corridor, and the spirit of devilment runs along it. The men in line cough and groan, one doubles up with pain, there a man falls in a fit and froths copiously at the mouth; the air becomes charged with tension. Old Kinney could recall at least two such scenes which ended in attempts to escape, a rush on the guards and men dead and wounded.

Now Sloane had been coached by his predecessor, and he knew that Dr. Carson had been a favorite, that he had left word with his charges that he—Sloane—was to be given a fair show. But Carson was gone. This new man was something else again, and a few adventurous spirits wished to try him out. This was soon evident by the rapidly growing line, in spite of his utmost efforts.

Then the Professor—the fat and officious drug-orderly at his side—did not help matters by his warnings in a stage-whisper—

"Don't let 'em gang up on you, doctor!"

Suddenly the new doctor began to move with a smooth quickness that was startling, passing the men on at a steady walk. One look as a man came up, one question, a slap of stethoscope to chest and he barked an order to the Professor—usually for "No. 2," or one of Carson's ready-mixed faker-cures. Sick line moved up at a march.

Then the first man "flopped"—far down the line—fell to the floor in a real or faked epileptic seizure, kicking and frothing at the lips. Now the full technic in these cases takes time. The average crook is prone

to real fits, due to old head-injuries, so it is wise to feel of his head for dents before deciding that his is a plain case of soap and shamming. Men have been known to provide themselves with the regulation bit of soap in the mouth—and then to have a real epileptic seizure! It is well to be careful.

But this was no ordinary occasion. Already Sloane noted other fakers furtively slipping their bits of soap into their cheeks, preparing for an epidemic of fits.

Instead of rushing down the line to the fallen man, he stood up from the chest he was listening at, made a signal to Bruce—the little convict surgical orderly who did minor dressings—and went on with his work briskly. Bruce came a-running, and to him Sloane said quietly:

"See if that is soap. If it is, turn the hose on him and keep the nozzle handy for the next one. Understand?"

"You're — whistling!" yelped Bruce loyally, and he was off on the jump.

The coiled firehose was in its rack near by, and Bruce twirled the valve with one hand while the other grabbed the nozzle—he reached the prostrate and frothing figure at the same instant that the water reached the nozzle. With a crackling rush the stream shot forth. The would-be sufferer was caught fair in the stomach; his breath came out with a grunt, and he was rolled along the stone flagging in a rushing torrent that followed and kept him going. Sick line began to waver and to show signs of panic.

"Eyes fr-ront!" roared old Kinney. "For-rm line!"

And the line straightened.

"Turn it off, Bruce!" Sloane called clearly. "Stand by for the next!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Bruce came to salute neatly.

There was sudden silence, broken only by the sucking of the water running off through the soil-pipes. The drenched epileptic sat up and gasped, spat out water and looked lost. There was no rule to govern in such cases. He looked about him and met grins everywhere. Slowly he picked himself up and crept to old Kinney.

"What'll I do, Mr. Kinney? I'll ketch cold and have newmony," he whined.

"Gwa-an! Ye needed a bath!" said the old lion gruffly, then in a rougher undertone—

"Go to the boiler-room and dhry yerself, and no more monkey-shines!"

While this episode held attention several of the waiting candidates in the line had quietly sneaked across to the line of finished cases; two openly spat out their soap and grinned, while more than half the remaining cases confessed that they felt much better or frankly admitted malingering. Within five minutes sick line consisted of four men.



MOREOVER, when the last gang had gone into the mess-hall, when the long corridor had ceased to echo to the *shish—shish* of scraping feet, there were only three men left in line for Sloane to see. Already the keepers had gone to their dining-room discussing the new M. D.

"Here's a bad egg, doctor!" The Professor's whisper tickled Sloane's ear. "They call him 'Killer' Kirby; he's been butler up at the big house, and he's lapped up a lot of the warden's booze. Shaky—look at the lamps on him!"

It was an evil face that looked up at Sloane's, with bloodshot eyes and loose, snarling lips; but purple and twitching with fear and weakness. The man was on the ragged edge of delirium from alcohol withdrawal.

"Say, Clarence!" rasped this creature with vicious scorn. "Gimme a dose of cyanid and have it over!"

Sloane paid no attention to the offensive tone. He listened to the man's fast-tripping heart.

"Don't be in such a hurry," he told the twitching one. "You are just starting in on the tremors, but I can straighten you out."

"Aw, can the bunk!" snarled Kirby. "Nothing but a pint of whisky will do me any good. Do I get it?"

"You do not, but you will get something that will set you on your feet."

"Aw, go to —, you girl-faced chorus-man!" grated the shaking wreck, and he turned away; was instantly swung back into place by a painful grip on his arm.

"Don't scorn us so!" pleaded Sloane. "We can do you good, and we are going to do it. A full ounce tincture digitalis, Professor, at one dose. No, not a dram; an ounce. That's right—a little water in it."

"I won't take it! Tie my heart in knots—kill a horse!" hoarsely rasped the man in stripes. "You're a — of a doctor!"

Sloane was saying to the head keeper—
"Please transfer this man to hospital, Mr. Kinney."

"Right!" Kinney turned with his notebook. "Here you! Name and cell-number! Swally your dope and move on; it'll not hur-rt ye. Many's the time I seen Doc Carson give that same."

"That's right—great stuff for the jim-jams," confirmed the Professor importantly. "Down with it!"

"All right; here she goes!"

Kirby held up the graduate in a violently shaky hand.

"If I croak you wear stripes; it's a poison dose, and you all know it."

The glass knocked at his teeth as he tossed it off, then he turned to Sloane once more to spit out viciously the words:

"No use sending me to hospital. Not a cent of graft in it for you; get that right now!"

"That'll do you!" Kinney brushed the man aside. "Go wait on that bench. Any more transfers, doc?"

And in a whisper,

"Watch that cuss; dangerous."

"This last man looks like a transfer for another reason."

Sloane was looking with admiration at a giant with a viking face who came last in line. His keeper was beside him to explain:

"He's in my gang in the quarry, doctor. He don't talk, so they call him the 'Dummy.' Look at those hands!" pulling up the man's hands, shapely and fine-skinned, torn and bleeding. "He did that saving the life of a wop that fell under a block, just when they were flopping it over. Caught and *hild* it, he did, with his hands; it took six men to ease it off'n him."

Meanwhile the big man seemed to try to hide his bleeding hands.

"There y'are! — that fat slob!" broke out Kinney as the Professor slid to the floor against the wall. "Does a stage-faint whinever he does be seeing a drop of blood; look at the face of him!"

With closed eyes and open mouth the fat drug-orderly's face had fallen forward on his chest, putty-colored and blank; but he revived at the first dash of water and picked himself up with shamed apologies.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen; can't help it," he said crisply as he packed up his kit. "A birth-mark. That's Bruce's department, anyhow."

Already Bruce was cleansing and dressing the Dummy's hands, and the Professor kept his eyes turned away, picking up his box and starting for the hospital. Sloane stood admiring the deft skill of the little orderly whom Carson had trained, and who in the outside world was a Boston burglar, when the dep came up to join the group. Murphy was a bit more hopeful. He tried to sound hearty and congratulatory.

"Good work, doc! That hose business was great stuff. I bet you had it doped out when you came in to sick line."

"Before that." Sloane smiled. "Yesterday when Carson showed me around the prison and told me about fake fits."

"Look at the hands on this lad, Jawn."

Kinney came forward.

"He's the man that caught the five-ton block. What's the name and number? I forgot. Where is that fat old granny in pants?"

He turned to look for the Professor, but the big man suddenly boomed out—

"Condon, first tier, Old Number Twenty-four, sir."

"Good man! Ye're after findin' your voice—and a good one. Take him up to hawspital to finish up, Bruce. Just a minute, doctor."

When Sloane and the old head keeper were alone Kinney said:

"It's good judgmint ye showed, doctor. Now ye got the jump on them, keep them on the run. One thing I want to tell yeh. This Kirby has a bad record. He might be one of 'Blackbeard's' men, I wouldn't wonder. This big Condon is no common crook—may be a planted dick; but I wouldn't thry to pump him. And that's all, only—if ye want a tip on what's what, come to me and not to Jawn. He's troubles of his own."

Sloane absorbed it all, asked no questions, but said seriously:

"That is mighty white of you, Mr. Kinney. I am glad to know I have two friends here."

"And *who's* the other?"

Kinney's abrupt question was no compliment.

"Bruce." Sloane's eyes twinkled. "He didn't even shy at my looks yesterday. He said I could count on him from the kick-off."

"Did he so? Y'have a friend worth

havin'. That little porch-climber has somethin' in that head of his, I'm tellin' yeh. Another place to go for information—Aunt Mary in the women's ward. Maybe Carson told yeh?"

"He did, but I thank you just the same. I see Mr. Murphy can't quite stomach my fatal beauty."

And the young man's smile was suddenly bleak as he added:

"I'm used to that. I'm keeping you from lunch."

Before eating, himself, Sloane had to go through the form of inquiring for patients on the women's side. As he passed through the main entrance hall he did not miss the grins and nudges of the few belated "screws" on their way to their dinner, but there was something menacing in the faint smile on his sensitive face, and the muscles of his jaw rippled the fine skin of his cheeks.

II



"NOBODY sick, as usual, doctor."

Mrs. Donovan, assistant head matron, was a pretty, red-headed Irish widow of Sloane's own age—in years. She gave her report with a warm, admiring smile that annoyed him. He could feel his face flush as usual, which made him feel like the hero of cheap fiction, too pure-hearted and brave to face a good woman. Then he wanted to kick himself. It was ever thus. He cleared his throat severely.

"Good!" said he. "Where's Mrs. Sullivan, the head matron? Is she sick?"

"Just a headache. Anything I can do?"

The young widow smiled all the more and asked kindly:

"What is it? Doesn't Maynard keep your rooms neat? Or does Mary spill soup down your back?"

"No. The women are all mighty good to me—too good!" he blurted.

Then he grinned to soften his rudeness. The pretty widow's smile faded.

"Don't you care, my dear boy!"

She leaned forward.

"Men are stupid, but they'll come round. And listen to me. I've got just the girl for you, the head nurse of the operating-room over at the hospital. You'll forget everything else. But I'll have a talk with John—Mr. Murphy—myself."

It was her turn to blush. She and the dep were engaged: Meanwhile Sloane had

lost his breath for an instant. Women were the deuce! He frowned.

"How d'you mean the men will come round?" he growled.

She shook her head.

"Now—now! No bidding for compliments. You know you can make them sit up and open their mouths if you— Oh, you know perfectly well what I mean. Go get your lunch and then visit with Aunt Mary—you kid!"

And with a toss of her shapely red head Mrs. Donovan sat down at the little desk by the window, opened the book she had kept bookmarked by one finger and nodded dismissal.

Sloane turned away, looking startled and worried, but at the door he turned to look back, caught Mrs. Donovan's eye over her book—"Trilby"—and stammered—

"I—er—thank you!"

She only wrinkled her nose at him.

On his way to his rooms to wash up he did some discontented thinking. Why did women always get next to him in that irritating fashion? Was it because he was really effeminate at bottom? The handsome face he saw in the mirror was rather unusual—it could flash so suddenly from one mood to another and express them all so vividly. Now it hardened and chilled to grim lines as he looked. He had a hard job on hand, and running the pen hospital was a small part of it!

His lunch was served to him in lonely state in his own dining-room by a comely mulatto girl who began to talk as she placed his soup-plate.

"Mis' Donovan a raight pretty lady—yass, s'—but I reckon thish yeh 'Queen o' Cha'ity Hospital' they so crazy about mus' be a sight prettier; yass, s'!"

"Who said anything about Mrs. Donovan? I didn't."

"No-o, s'. Ah did!" responded the girl blandly. "Mis' Donovan goin' to ma'y Depity Wahden Murphy some day, Ah reckon. Raight pretty lady!"

"What's your name?" Sloane asked abruptly. He looked at the girl sternly until she blinked her eyes like a cat. "Dr. Carson told me, but I forget."

"Suh? Ma name? Ma name Ma'y."

The soft, pleasant voice was almost a whisper. The girl was frightened, so he smiled.

"May? May what?"

The bronze face flashed alight, and, the rich voice came back happily:

"Ma'y, not May, suh. Ma name Ma'y—Ma'y Ifounder. Yass, s'—Ma'y Ifounder."

"Mary—Mary I-Found-Her!" Sloane translated. "Do you mean that is a *real* family name? Was your father's name I-Found-Her?"

The girl opened her mouth in a rich chuckling laugh:

"Mah *fatheh!* Mah goo'ness, Ah ain't studyin' bout mah fatheh; nev' did have none, Ah reckon. But the fat black 'oman what raised me, she done tell how she foun' me in a basket on the doo'step an' name me Ma'y Ifounder. Folks in them pahts was mighty high-haided—cullud folks *an'* all—*an'* she didn't have no man, so she——"

Sloane, red and uncomfortable, interrupted—

"Oh, all right—all right!"

Sloane pushed back his chair, left a quarter on the cloth and fled from the room. But the clear, smooth voice followed:

"Thank y', s'! Reckon y'all don't care much fo' gerls, but that 'Queen o' Cha'ity Hospital'——"

He was clattering down the broad stairs, threatening Mrs. Donovan mentally for planting this talking waitress in his dining-room to embarrass him. Every woman should be born dumb or equipped with a stopper.

In the chill prison lobby he climbed the long spiral iron stairs with a firm determination to finish his noon rounds quickly. Then he could go in town for his regular work-out at Senter's Gymnasium.

The men's ward was sunny and quiet with the peace of early afternoon. A few convalescents read or played checkers in small groups between beds. The Professor was ready, note-book in hand, to follow at Sloane's elbow and jot down any directions. The round over, he returned to his little office at the end of the ward, to examine the new transfers. There were only two—big Condon of the bandaged hands and the rum-soaked Kirby.

It was the custom for the doctor to sit in state in the office while Riley, the red-nosed hospital keeper, ushered in the hoboos one by one. Riley was always comfortably drunk at this hour, but he ran the ward with military perfection and had the respect as well as the affection of the in-

mates. His blurred face appeared in the door as Sloane took his seat.

"Kirby or the big fella first, doctor?"

"Condon."

"Yes, sir!"

The big man with the bandaged hands stepped through the door, moving with the easy certainty of an athlete, and stood until Sloane waved him to a chair. Sloane faced the open door. Just outside, not five yards away, the Professor was importantly and self-consciously compounding medicines. Sloane noted with a smile that the fat man's ears were pricked to catch every word, so he leaned close to Condon's ear to whisper—

"Are you a genuine convict—a prisoner here?"

The big fellow did not even shake his head; but he rolled his eyes toward the door over his shoulder. Sloane got the movement and called to the Professor—

"Professor, give that asthma case his first dose right now, please."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The fat drug-orderly's quick, light step went down the ward. Then Condon spoke, but in as low a rumble as his deep voice could manage:

"The night-orderly is just the other side of that partition. You asked me——"

"Are you a genuine crook or a detective?"

"I was sent up for attempted blackmail, but I can get out at any time. I shall not stop here more than a week longer."

The clean-cut enunciation and the "stop" instead of "stay," caused Sloane to ask—

"Scotland Yard?"

Condon nodded, and Sloane went further—

"On this Blackbeard business?"

"Connected with that matter."

Condon seemed reluctant to speak out, but he rapidly put in:

"Please don't make any difference in your manner. And all I can tell you is that I have made no progress. The 'Main Guy' is not here, but I am watching this Kirby," rising as if to go.

"You seemed to suspect the Professor of being a spy," suggested Sloane.

"He's just a gossip old woman—a joke." With a solemn smile Condon finished: "But he's always listening, so it's just as well to be specially careful. I'd be much obliged if you'd not even talk to me in private; it would arouse suspicion."

"Very well."

Sloane heard the quick footsteps of the Professor returning, and spoke out full voice:

"So you had better stay up here for the balance of the week. You can't work with those hands, but you might help about the ward—run the bandage-roller or do light jobs. That's all."

Condon left at once. Then—

"Next, Mr. Riley."

Kirby came at Riley's rough summons and entered the office scowling. He looked much better already. What he had lost in tremulous misery he had gained in insolence, however. He sat down without permission and bent on Sloane a look of sneering contempt.

"Say!" he began loudly, "Where did a young squirt like you learn that digitalis stunt for the jim-jams? It ain't in the books."

"You have studied medicine?" Sloane asked.

His lips were tight-pressed.

"No. Pharmacy; enough to know that an ounce of digitalis would raise — with a well man. It did me good, I give you that; but what I want to know is where you think your graft comes in. I got no friends outside that will put up anything for giving me a soft berth in hospital, so this time you lose, see?"

Sloane knew that there had been penitentiary physicians before Carson's day who had run the hospital on a cash basis, so he took a moment to cool off.

"Now listen to me!" he said at length in a level tone. "I shall tell you this just one time. First, you will keep a civil tongue in your head from this minute. Next, I am not taking money for transfers to hospital. And last, I found you a shivering, frightened wreck and sent you up here to make a man of you physically. And I am going to do it."

He had got so far when Kirby came out of his chair, his evil lips stretched in a twitching snarl and his hands clawing in front of his face. As he crept on Sloane he gritted brokenly through his teeth—

"You'll make a man— You—you pink-cheeked — — — — —! — — — — — your soul! I'll——"



SMACK!

Kirby crashed into the corner on the wreck of a chair, and there lay limp with his head on one shoulder. A thin trickle of blood ran from his mouth.

The doctor had sprung from his chair and struck, like a rattler from his coil, on the instant that the obscene epithet left Kirby's lips. He stood now with jaw squared, glaring down at the fallen man through narrowed lids, and his handsome face had suddenly taken on straight and rugged outlines, while his deep hazel eyes glittered cold and steely.

The office door opened softly. Riley poked in his head and his right hand, holding a Colt .45 ready for business. Sloane looked up with a quick nod.

"All right, Riley."

The head and gun vanished as silently as they had appeared. The ward outside was silent—apparently listening.

Kirby opened his eyes, goggled up at Sloane, then looked all about the office as if searching for his senses. Sloane spoke in the same level voice.

"Get up!"

Kirby scrambled to his feet hastily, then dodged as the doctor let fall his clenched hands, whining—

"Don't hit a sick man, doctor!"

"I'm not going to hit you—again," Sloane went on in the same tone. "I only slapped you with an open hand. I am ashamed of that, but I told you to keep a civil tongue. I tell you now I will not stand for filth. Don't ever use such rotten words where I can hear them. Do you understand?"

From the rasp of the last three words Kirby again started and dodged.

"Yes—yes. Sure I understand!"

Standing up as Sloane relaxed, Kirby tried to propitiate him. His attempt to smile was a sickening grimace.

"I didn't mean anything, doctor; I'm sick; not responsible; but I got what was comin' to me. You came out o' that chair so — quick——"

"That will do." Sloane turned away. "Take the medicine when the Professor brings it to you, and keep a watch on your filthy tongue."

Kirby sidled past him toward the door, peering aslant with fear as he asked:

"You won't tell the dep, doc? I lose my good-conduct time if you do, and I go out in three days——"

"No! Get out!"

The quick words cracked like a whip. Kirby jerked, stumbled through the door and clapped it shut after him. Sloane

stood for a moment, looking at his tingling hand. He suddenly became fixed—alertly listening.

In the ward outside Kirby was at it again. He could hear his hoarse, malevolent voice, but the words were muffled. Then the Professor's voice, high and fearful.

"Look out! Bruce!" sounded above an outburst of grunting, scuffling feet—the scrape and crash of chairs—excited shouts.

Somebody fell heavily, shaking the floor. Sloane was through the door, stumbling over the prostrate figure of the Professor. Before he could stoop to see if he was hurt, a more dangerous picture caught his eye. The dining-table and chairs, used by orderlies and convalescents, were pushed to one side and overturned. Half under the table was a struggling mass of striped legs and arms, kicking and striking. Over it Riley was waving his clubbed gun, looking for a head to hit. Sloane saw a knife rise and fall once—again—a ghastly gush of blood; again the knife flashed up. Sloane dived for it.

He brought up solidly against a heavy body, was shunted aside, picked himself up and saw that Condon had got there first.

The big, silent man's bandaged hands took a grip on the struggling mass and held. One heave, and out came Bruce—red knife still in hand—wriggling in Condon's powerful grip.

As if the chunky orderly were a rag doll Condon flung Bruce half across the ward—under a bed—while the knife clattered on the floor. One more grip and pull, and Condon had out the other man. It was Kirby, spouting blood from a gash in his throat and already crimson down to his waist.

Sloane was upon the wound with one pounce, trying to hold together the long and slippery lips of the cut while he shouted clear and precise directions. There was no time for preparations. Half a minute of such bleeding meant a dead man.

And it was a doubtful battle—a real battle, for Kirby fought Sloane wildly, glare-eyed and furious, as if frantically determined to bleed to death, although his face was a hideous, crimson-streaked mask of terror. But not a movement was lost under Sloane's incisive commands.

"Riley—snaps and sterile sutures! Walsh—bandages and towels; tear 'em open! Condon, clinch him from behind—over

his arms! Lie down! On your back—wrap your legs round him—now hold him! Walsh, wrap that towel round his head—so—take it under your arm and hold it! Now with your other hand—other hand, man!—hold the edges as I have them; see? Careful! A few more spurts and he's gone. Good! Now freeze stiff and stay frozel!"

With Condon underneath, wrapped round the man's arms and legs and with Walsh—a trained surgical nurse—holding the head, Sloane soon had the severed vessels tied and the wound closed. Riley was a good and experienced assistant, just full enough to be steady-handed and efficient; and when the job was done he exchanged an owlish wink and nod with Walsh over the doctor's head. Although Sloane did not see it, it was the final seal of approval set upon his professional ability and nerve.

"There!" Sloane got up, wiping his hands. "Wash him up and put him in bed. Was the Professor hurt, or fainting?"

Focused on one thing at a time as usual, Sloane looked about the end of the ward, now a red and slimy shambles. Great clots and smears of blood on the floor—blood all over Condon—Walsh and Sloane himself sprinkled and smeared. Riley had managed to escape, and he now answered with a frown of boozy worryment.

"The fat slob! He's under the water-tap in the bathroom, and he'll be braggin' how he did the whole thing! But, doc!"

In a close whisper:

"Kinney's on the stairs, and the dep will be here soon—sore as a —! Don't try to con the old man! Give him the low-down and he'll stick; but Murph will be up in the air if this row has to go to the commish. It means his name is mud."

There was no time to make inquiries or plans, for Kinney's heavy steps were at the stair-top.

The head keeper entered deliberately, closing the door behind him. The old warrior's face was troubled and severe as he took in the near end of the ward with its signs of war's desolation. The mopping and cleaning stopped. Kinney finally brought his keen blue eyes round to Sloane, and they had a bit of a twinkle as the old man rumbled:

"Well, doc, had a bit of a clem in the war-rd, hadn't yeh? Is annybody kilt or bad-hurt, I dunno?"

He was stirred to the depths where the

brogue ran thick, and he looked fair in Sloane's eyes for the truth. Bruce moved up near Sloane's elbow, pale and tense with listening. All this time he had not spoken a word, but had been quietly helpful. He looked as if he were about to confess, but the doctor was before him.

"Kirby lost a lot of blood," he said calmly, "but he will be all right in a few days. No other casualties. The Professor fainted—again."

The fat man appeared just then, white and sick-looking, with his pompadoured hair sopped down.

"It's har-rd luck ye've had your first day—har-rd luck!" said old Kinney solemnly, then roared at the listening orderlies and helpers: "Let ye all keep busy! Clean up this mess!"

He came close to the doctor.

"I'd give more'n I got if this hadn't happened this day, lad! It's what Jawn was afraid of. If he reports it, he lose his chance at the Big House and maybe his job as well. He's on the stairs now. There will be red tape and ructions."

Sloane looked into the anxious old face intently.

"Then," he said slowly, "he must not know about it—officially."

"Man, ye can't keep it dark."

Sloane's reckless smile flashed out suddenly.

"Can't I? You watch me!"

He whirled and went into action with an energy that charged all his staff:

"Walsh! Bruce! Get those other screens—here—around these two beds next Kirby's! You fellows, spill those buckets of water—that way! Now grab those old newspapers, towels, any old thing; wipe it all the same way under those two beds! Towels now—take that bed-spread—*wipe* it! On the jump, everybody! Good work, Riley! Now everything and everybody with blood on him get back of the screens and stay there! The rest of you to your beds—read—play checkers! Kinney, hold him at the door a minute! Riley, a clean duck coat! A-all set!"

As Sloane shrugged into a fresh white coat and slapped down his hair old Kinney was fumbling at the stair-door and roaring through it:

"One minute, Jawn! The — lock is stuck. Just ha-lf a— There y' ar-re—walk in! It looks like somebody lied to

us, Jawn—nary man kilt at all, and only one hurt."

As the dep stepped in, sick with rage and disappointment, he cast a fierce and searching look about the ward. It showed little out of the ordinary.

Murphy was unable to speak at first. For lack of an object his rage gathered and choked him. Sloane waited for him, and the ward was silent.

"Well, Dr. Sloane," he began with biting irony, "I see you have done a quick clean-up. How about the man who jumped you in your office? What have you done with the man who was carved with a butcher-knife? And who started the war?"

Not a book or paper rustled; not a checker moved as the ward listened. Would the doctor give Bruce away, or lay the blame on Kirby? Sloane spoke with cool precision.

"Nobody jumped me, Mr. Murphy. Kirby was cut and lost some blood. As to who started the war—" here Sloane paused and met the dep's eyes—"I rather think I was to blame."

In the moment that the dep took to get his tongue there was an exchange of quick looks between the men in stripes. Then Murphy was even more sarcastic.

"Ye—es? That makes it nice—for me! And that's all, is it? Is *anybody* going to tell me the truth?"

He looked from Kinney to Riley and breathed hard through his nose. Riley, still comfortably stimulated, always a privileged character, took this for his cue.

"Listen, dep!" said he with blurred but ready utterance. "Doc's tellin' y' the truth all right. He c'n take care 'f himself all right. This here Kirby comes into doc's office goggle-eyed with the D. T.'s; he goes bug-house and calls doc a rotten name—I heard 'im. Doc he props him one with the flat of his hand and knocks 'im kickin'—just what the dirty crook needed! Doc tells him to keep a clean tongue in his head, and that's all there was to the jumpin' racket."

Riley simmered down to an anti-climax as he saw Sloane shaking a warning head over Murphy's shoulder. Murphy knew that Riley drunk was as truthful as Riley sober, and that was truthful enough.

"What I want to know is, who did the cutting!" he barked abruptly. "And since nobody will talk straight out, I will find out for myself. Where is this Kirby?"

He had started for the screens when Sloane's mild voice stopped him.

"Pardon me, Mr. Murphy, but I can't permit it."

"Wha—what's that?" The dep wheeled in his stride. "How can't *permi*t it?"

"I believe I'm within my rights when I say that I can't have my patient disturbed at present."

Murphy stood and seethed, gradually getting control of his fiery temper. The doctor was right; his professional orders could not be overruled by anybody but his "visiting." Sloane went on with quiet persuasion:

"Kirby is weak, a sick man. He was not himself when this row started. I will find out who was responsible for it. If you will leave the matter to me, Mr. Murphy, I will report to you whatever I find necessary."

Again there was a hush of suspense. Murphy had time to think; then he surprised every man in the ward by saying shortly:

"Right! You are the doctor."

He marched stiffly to the door. With hand on the knob he turned to say—

"I never come up to the hospital unless I am sent for."

"I didn't send for you, Mr. Murphy," Sloane pointed out gently.

And as the dep pulled the door open the back of his neck was very red.

 "I DIDN'T mean to be fresh," Sloane told Kinney.

"Ye were *not*!" said the head keeper emphatically. "He's no business to turn and bar-rk at ye like that. 'Twas uncalled-for."

"Seemed so to me."

Sloane sighed.

"And now, Bruce, what about this knife business?" he asked.

Bruce had been looking up into Sloane's face like a small bull-terrier. He had the same dog-like look in his small eyes as he said in his customary perfect English:

"I didn't intend to take a knife to him, doctor, and that is the straight truth," said the little Boston porch-climber. "He came out of the office and saw me looking at him. Perhaps I looked the way I felt—glad he got what was coming to him. Anyhow, he lit into me with every rotten name he could think of—the same he used to you. I lost my grip and climbed him. I don't remem-

ber anything about the knife until Condon pulled me off him. And that's true!"

"I believe you." Sloane was looking into the loyal little eyes. "But you certainly struck Kirby with the knife; I saw that."

Bruce nodded sadly.

"But I don't remember taking it off the table, doctor; I don't believe I did!"

Sloane looked at Riley, who shook his head.

"I was showin' Condon the bandage-roller, and I didn't look up till they were under the table, or I'd 'a' stopped it," said he sorrowfully. "It's too — bad. Bruce was goin' out, too, next Tuesday. I can't help him any."

"I can," spoke up the Professor. "I was looking. It was Kirby who grabbed the knife off the table, and Bruce took it away from him. I didn't pass out until the— Until I saw the blood."

He turned white again at the thought. Riley looked at him suspiciously but said nothing.

"I know what you're thinking," said the Professor with his thick-lipped, hurt smile. "You all call me a tall liar because I have imagination; but did you ever catch me lying in a question of fact?"

"Oh, you're foxy; I give you that," said Riley. "I can't swear I did— Only when you're braggin'— No, I never did."

"Then that settles the knife case," Sloane pronounced finally. "For Kirby was a sick man, and Bruce did just what any man would have done in his place. I say that this thing ought not to go any further. How about, it men?"

He looked around at the listening convalescents, and hoarse rumbles of assent came promptly. He had the crooks with him. Walsh acted as spokesman for them all when he came in hoarsely:

"That's dead right, doc. We'll stand by anything you say."

"Thanks." Sloane flashed his smile. "And I want to ask you fellows to do one thing more—just to humor me. I can stand cuss-words; there are places where they come handy; but I won't stand smutty talk. I want this crowd to help make Kirby and men like him lay off that stuff while they are in here. I will not stand for it! Are you with me?"

"Sure!"

"You're — whistlin'!"

"That goes!" and such endorsement was heard all round the room.

Doc was all right. He might look like a pretty girl and slap a man woman-fashion when he was mad, but he had proved he had guts and was "square" in a tight place. They were for him.

"But I expect I have made an enemy of Mr. Murphy," Sloane said as he walked to the door with the old head keeper. "I shall be lonesome over here for a while."

"He'll come round; don't worry," said Kinney. "But lonesome is it? Look at ye! And all the pretty ger-rls about; let ye go over to Charity and see the peach in the operatin'-room. Have ye had a talk with Aunt Mary?"

"Not yet—only when Corbin introduced me," said Sloane. "I am going to now."

"Do that thing!" Kinney warmly approved. "She's the wise guy of this prison. She will fill you up with the Blackbeard case and the Queen of Charity. Then ye'll be courtin' the ger-rl, gettin' your face punched, and it's small time ye'll have for bein' lonesome. So long, doc!"

Kinney went down the stairs and left Sloane thinking. Like many quiet men, Sloane had a fashion of talking to himself when he was absorbed. He stopped on his way to the office, looking out of the window at the East River as he asked abruptly—

"Now why should I get my face punched?"

"Because you're the kind girls go crazy over."

Little Bruce was at his elbow, looking into his face hungrily for the slow smile that came to reward him as Sloane said:

"They go crazy and punch my face. That the idea?"

"Nuh! Other fellow will do that." Bruce was tersely oracular and sure. "But, doc, Kinney gave it to you straight. Aunt Mary will put you hep to anything you want to know if she 'fahncies' you—daoun't you knaow!—and I hear she fell hard for you at sight."

It was rather fascinating to look at the pug-faced little crook and to hear him use pure English with crook's patter and a cockney quotation interlarded. Sloane stood looking for an intent minute while he slowly flushed.

"Oh, hm!" He cleared his throat. "Thank you, Bruce. Was that what you came to tell me?"

"Yes, sir. I—there's no use saying, 'Thank you'—in *my* saying, 'Thank you,' for what you did for me. Maybe I can do something to show I am grateful some time. That's all, sir."

And little Bruce hurried away, leaving Sloane still more thoughtful.

The entrance to the women's ward was through his office. Before passing through he closed the office door behind him and looked in the mirror over the set-bowl in the corner. Was it because his face was regular, sensitive, fine-skinned, that people called him "girl-faced"?

A few blood-spatters caught his attention, and he was washing them off when he heard talking just outside at the Professor's drug-cabinet. The first voice was that of Walsh, specially hoarse and solemn as always when he was badgering the fat drug-orderly:

"Oh, sure! He's got nerve to stand up to the dep like that, but he can't fight, he's too pretty and lady-like for a rough-house scrapper."

"A lot you know about fighters!" snapped the Professor irritably. "Ever hear of Stan Kendal? How much did he weigh? And the first man that ever put *him* out, the Texas Kid, weighed in at one hundred and seventy or less; he knocked 'the Assassin' cold in the fourth round. I don't suppose you even heard of that fight."

"I heard you tell about it." Walsh's tone was insinuating as well as flattering. "Let's see, was you managin' that fight? I get things mixed."

A few snickers were audible.

"Ah-h, go on! Your crude attempts at wit are pitiful—pathetic!" The Professor's retort was spoken with lordly disdain. "It's deadening to the intellect to talk to you. But you can put me on record right now as saying that Dr. Sloane could fight, so far as his build is concerned. Sloane has got good shoulder-muscles if he knew how to use 'em."

"Sure! You can always tell a fighter. He slaps open-handed, like a perfect lady. Ain't that right?" Walsh retorted sadly.

There were sounds of a good-natured scuffle, and Sloane opened the office-door.

Walsh and one or two convalescents fled down the ward as Sloane called to the keeper—

"Key, Mr. Riley, please!"

"Yes, doctor; comin', doctor."

Riley came jingling his bunch of keys and

flushing guiltily. Guying the Professor was one of his favorite indoor sports. At a distance he began—

"Goin' to see the Kelly-Sharbett fight, doc?" Riley was talking to cover his embarrassment. "They say they got it all fixed with the police and the officers to pull it off over in Jersey Tuesday night. All the swells will be there. Kelly can get a fight with the champ if he puts away Sharbett. They say he's as good as ever he was——"

"I'd like to see it," interrupted Sloane, for Riley was wound up for any distance; "but I don't expect I can raise the price of a seat."

"The dep can get you one, he's got a pull, and all you got to do is talk to him. He ain't goin' to stand on his dignity when he finds you saved his bacon on this Bruce business; you take it from me, doc! Ask A'nt Mary if you don't believe it."

And with that final adjuration he let the doctor pass through into the women's ward. Truly, Aunt Mary's was a name to conjure with in this institution.

III

 THE women's ward was sunny and pleasant, with a row of windows on the long south side looking toward "Charity"—the City Hospital—and over the East River to Brooklyn Bridge in the distance. There were only three women in bed at the far western end, and two convalescents were sewing and talking to two orderlies near by them.

But half-way down the ward in a sunny window-alcove sat Aunt Mary in royal state. She was knitting, now and then casting a benignant glance toward the women in the end of the ward when their voices rose too audibly. Every one of the inmates was in stripes.

No matron was needed in this ward the greater part of the time, because Aunt Mary could be trusted to keep it in perfect order.

Aunt Mary was plump and sixty; blue-eyed, red-cheeked and comely. With her smoothly parted, snow-white hair and her kindly, keen, British blue eyes peering at him over her spectacles, she was for some reason so tremendous that Sloane felt his courage oozing out at every pore. Outside she was a gem-expert known to three continents, with a large bank-balance; but in

the pen she was a figure of still greater power. He suddenly decided that he would make a quick round of the ward and clear out; there were too many women here anyhow.

He was about to pass on with a shy smile and greeting, but she laid down her knitting. He was in for it. He was not half-sorry, for he recalled Carson's instructions:

"You take time to talk to Aunt Mary. She may make you squirm, but she can help you more than anybody if she likes you."

So he smiled his prettiest and sat down, asking after her rheumatism.

"My legs are better, 'k you," said Aunt Mary crisply. "I 'ear you 'ad a bit of a turn-up with Kirby, what? A pity you didn't give 'im a right beatin'-up. Did 'e 'it you?"

Sloane answered frankly:

"No. I am ashamed of that—cuffing a sick man."

The disconcerting old lady stopped knitting and looked at him still more keenly.

"You didn't even close your 'and?" she asked.

"No. I only wanted to stop his foul mouth."

"Ah—I see. You, Miriam! W'at are you 'angin' abaout for? 'E don't want to 'old 'ands with *you*. The doctor ain't the spoony sort, for all he's so 'andsome! Sit down on that stool and be'ave yourself, gerl!"

And to the astounded Sloane Aunt Mary went on:

"Ever feel a skin like that, doctor? Feel that neck; she won't bite! Oh, my word, you're a fair treat! A chap that can blush like that, these days!"

Aunt Mary put back her head to laugh, showing wonderfully white teeth. And Sloane was blushing thoroughly, for he was taken utterly by surprise.

Out of nowhere apparently Aunt Mary had summoned a fair girl like a beautiful slave out of an Arabian Night. She had fine golden hair in two great braids. The top of her gown was rolled down to bare her neck—her skin was like a rose-petal—an incredible vision in that setting. Obediently she had sunk to the stool Aunt Mary kicked out, close to his knee—so close that he got the faint fragrance of her hair—and with quiet composure she took his hand to place it on the cool velvet of her neck.

At the same time she turned up to him a pair of clear dark eyes, startling in contrast with her blond loveliness. She seemed to accept the situation as perfectly right and natural. Aunt Mary had wiped her eyes and now proceeded to apologize:

"She's some kind of heathen, they say, and don't talk much English. Shopliftin' is what 'er papers read, but it's my guess they sent 'er up to keep 'er off the streets until they find 'er folks. She was scared to death at first, but I tell 'er nobody can buy 'er in this country. All she needs is good food and kindness. Oh-h, my good lord! W'at a pair!"

With another breathy outburst of laughter Aunt Mary dropped her knitting, covered her eyes and rocked.

"Good as—a play! Wouldn't miss it—for ten grand! Clean as a 'ound's tooth, both of 'em—and 'e's scared of 'er! W'at a pair to draw to—w'at a pair!" while she rocked and shook with gasping chuckles in between.

"There! Don't you mind me, doctor; I couldn't 'elp it! But I ahsk you now—can you beat 'er?"

"I— No—I don't want to," stammered Sloane. "Who—what is she? Where did she come from? And did you frame this just to see me squirm?"

He got to his feet angrily. Aunt Mary was not a bit impressed.

"Sit down, lad! Maybe I 'ad a reason; maybe it was a good one; but I 'ave got something to say— There—let 'er 'old your 'and if she likes. It makes 'er 'appy, and I'll see she don't make trouble for you— I promise you you'll not be sorry."

When he was seated again with the gazelle-eyed Miriam gently stroking his hand Aunt Mary said with a quiet authority:

"Now tell me just w'at 'appened from sick line up to now. Don't leave out any of it."

It was not easy to concentrate under the conditions, but, aided by an occasional shrewd question, Sloane told her about his word-duel with the dep. He finished grimly:

"So now Mr. Murphy has no earthly use for me. He took a dislike to me at sight, and I am used to that—I have been there before. I don't pretend to be much of a doctor, but when it comes to handling men——"

"You're a bit of all-right as a doctor,"

Aunt Mary broke in rudely. "And I want to tell you about my rheumatism. Miriam, you run down-stairs and play with Mrs. Donovan, there's a good gerl."

The girl rose gracefully, holding Sloane's hand to the last moment, then obeyed in silence. At the stair-door she cast a lingering backward look at him. Aunt Mary was watching her over her spectacles.

"You're a smooth article, my gerl," was her low comment. "But—there are others!"

Sloane looked at the benign old face, suddenly keen and cold, and opened his eyes.

"What do you mean? Is she a spy or something?"

"Ah—or something."

Aunt Mary nodded and went on knitting: "They don't 'appen in 'ere—'Circassian Beauties' out of a side-show—and I was workin' a try out on both of you, so to speak. I ahsk your pardon, sir, if I seemed impertinent; but this is no joke you 'ave stumbled into. They're on to you like a wolf!"

"Who?" Sloane was startled. "And what for?"

"Ah—'oo? That's the point," nodded Aunt Mary. "But it 'as the smell of this Blackbeard outfit. 'Ave you done any talkin' about 'em?"

"Never a word. I don't know a thing about it. I haven't even read the papers beyond the headlines. It is nothing to me."

"There's w'ere you are mistiken. Now come straight to cases!"

Abruptly the old lady dropped her hands in her lap and looked through him.

"I promised Carson I'd help you, and I can't do it unless you come clean."

Her speech changed with her manner, which was now sharp and compelling.

"About me, you mean?"

Sloane hesitated. Aunt Mary prodded him on.

"Of course. Cut out the conversation and spill it."

"Well, I don't know how much Carson told you. I——"

Aunt Mary broke in:

"That you didn't have to practise; you had an income from half a big ranch out West. You and your partner made a strike in the Klondike and put it into a ranch. The other man runs it, and your share of the profit is enough to live on. You studied medicine as a—a 'obby, like. Now it's your move!"

She dropped one H as she came to an end.
 "All right!" Sloane decided abruptly.
 "I'll tell you what I didn't tell Carson because I—I was told to keep it dark. That hasn't got me anywhere, so we'll try your way. I took this job for the present because I haven't got but forty-two dollars and eleven cents to my name, and unless I find Dave—my partner who ~~was~~ running the ranch—I shall never have another cent until I make it."

Aunt Mary was knitting again. She counted seven and slipped three before she asked:

"Dave skipped? Or was he rolled for your wad?"

"Dave is square!" Sloane announced.
 "He got a good price for the ranch and started to meet me here in New York. I know he left Chicago on the Limited a week ago—and vanished. I can't hire any more private detectives—I'm broke; and the police have lost interest. It's Dave I am worrying about!"

"Ah!" Aunt Mary gave her little nod.
 "And this money—it was all in bank-notes—cash? Or did 'e 'ave sense to bank it?"

"Dave was keen, but he didn't like banks." Sloane smiled. "I expect it was mostly cash."

"Is last letter—w'ere is it?"

Aunt Mary took the letter Sloane handed her and examined the envelope carelessly. But as she took out the enclosure she commented:

"Raw work. You saw it 'ad been steamed open?"

Sloane nodded, and she read hastily. Coming to the end, she held up the sheet to the sunlight with her quick nod.

"The date changed—that was done better," she stated.

"The date? What——"

Sloane started eagerly.

"Date of 'is arrival. You met the train Thursday," said Aunt Mary; "but I'll wager 'e got off the Limited on Wednesday. That's w'y your dicks couldn't pick up 'is trail—started a day late. It looks a bit like a Blackbeard job, but—this Dave was no gon*? 'E wasn't a card-sharp or con man ever?"

Sloane protested hotly:

"Certainly not! Dave was a prince—a big-hearted man who wouldn't take a cent that didn't belong to him."

* Big crook.

"That's all right," raising a hand.
 "This Blackbeard never 'as worked anybody but gamblers or high-class crooks—a wise guy. Just the same, that's the line to follow, because you'll get *somewhere* if you can get next to one of 'is bunch. Keep away from the bulls and the dicks, go about your business as if you were 'appy, and tomorrow afternoon go see the Queen o' Charity—'ead nurse of the operatin'-room over yonder."

With a tilt of her sleek white head toward the city hospital that was directly in line with the window where she sat, Aunt Mary added:

"See 'er 'ome if you can. She lives in town, and she's 'andsome—'andsomer than this 'ere Miriam. You'd not mind gettin' your face punched a bit."

"You're about the fourth person to say that, not counting Carson," Sloane said.
 "What does it mean?"

Aunt Mary soothed him:

"Never you mind; you'll find out soon enough. W'at gymnasium are you goin' to?"

"Senter's. Why?"

"Just give Jem Martin my regards—Mary Stribling's regards—and tell 'im I'll be seein' 'im in a month or so," she told him comfortably. "And don't go to gettin' all stirred up about this thing. You keep in fit condition and let me do the 'eavy thinkin'. You'll 'ave your 'ands full soon enough. Now run along and play."

"That's easy to say." Sloane got up reluctantly. "But this has been a busy day with me, and a lot of things have happened. I want to ask so many questions that I don't know where to begin, but I thank you—a lot!"

"Don't mention it—and don't worry," said the placid old lady. "You'll learn as you go on. Just take things as they come."

And she nodded his dismissal. On his way back through the office and men's ward he found Riley excited by a discussion with the Professor.

"Look here, doc!" Riley appealed to him at once. "Is this fat lobster stringin' us? He has been givin' us a song and dance about this Texas Kid—a lot of stuff he made up out of his own fat head, about this gunthrower and all-round terror that disappeared after he had put out Kendal in a prize-fight. Now you've been out West—ever hear of any such fight? Was there any such man as The Texas Kid?"

The orderlies stood listening. Sloane answered:

"Yes. He fought Kendal in Denver a few years ago. It was in the papers."

"Aha! Oho!" exploded the Professor at his drug-cabinet. "Now will you be good?"

Riley frowned to cover his discomfiture.

"Ah-h, gwan, yuh fat clown!" he growled. "You don't tell the doctor what you was sayin' about him—you better turn red! Look at 'im blush now!"

"Nothing to be ashamed of," protested the fat drug-orderly. "I only said he had been on the plains within a year himself. Isn't that right, doctor?"

"Yes. I rode for a couple of weeks last month," Sloane admitted. "How did you know?"

The Professor tried to be casual and careless.

"Tan-line still shows on your forehead—nothing else just like it."

And he went on fussing with his bottles. Riley's disgust was too strong for expression.

"Ya-ah!" He turned away with a shrug. "Bunk! I'm — glad you go out next week."

"Just the same he wins this time," Sloane pointed out.

"Victory of mind over—Hibernian prejudice!" chortled the Professor.

Riley turned on him with a fierce frown and came close and stuck out his jaw—it was at the level of the Professor's third vest-button—as he growled:

"There—that'll do you now, yuh yella wind-bag! For two cents I'd smear——"

"No offense, Mr. Riley; no offense!" The smile on the thick lips became a frightened smirk. "You misunderstood me. I didn't intend——"

"A-a-ah, gwan!"

Riley swung on his heel and stalked off.

The sudden panic of fright that had transformed the Professor's face was a thing to make the beholder ashamed. Sloane left the ward, more than ever eager to get to the gym—to stretch his muscles and get a rushing, stinging shower-bath.

IV



THE afternoon's work was well under way in the busy operating-room at "Charity," the City Hospital, when Sloane entered quietly and found a place where he could see and not be

seen. If this head nurse was such a marvel, he wanted a good look at her before he dared to present to her Corbin's informal note of introduction. No doubt she was spoiled from much adoration.

He noted that the doctors looking on seemed to have their eyes fixed on the head nurse the greater part of the time. Also it was evident that the subordinate nurses looked to her solely for orders, and these orders were given in absolute silence—probably by signs or gestures. Then he focused upon the head nurse herself, and lost all sense of time or environment.

He didn't know how long he had been staring when he awoke, tense and cramped, to feel his own existence again. It was simply impossible; they didn't happen like that; there must be a flaw in her beauty; he had been disappointed before.

But he could revel in her absolute unconsciousness of self—the perfection of her skill—so exquisite that it made him ache. She was the very center and moving spirit of all the silent work about that life-and-death table. Not only the nurses but the assisting interns looked to her more often than to Dr. Wise when in doubt what to do, and with the cool ease of utter mastery she moved all the white-robed figures like chessmen—by a tilt of her graceful head, a turn of her dark eyes, a lift of the long lashes. Keenly conscious of everything in that room that might affect the result of the operation, she was insensible to her own importance and monopoly of attention.

But Dr. Wise was a great man. He was conscious of everything—including his perfect assistant. Once she caught even him in a breach of sterile technic. He had inadvertently dragged a ligature over the non-sterile face of the "House"—his chief assistant—who happened himself to be staring at the girl's hand in its rubber glove. That same graceful hand recovered the polluted filament—the other substituted a clean one—a lift of the regal dark lashes summoned a "probe*" to bear away the dangerous thing and bring a fresh glove—and it was all done with a deft, unconscious quickness that made the great man smile. He even paused in his work.

"Gentlemen," he said impressively, "I want you to realize the vital need of perfection in technic. That ligature might

* Man on probation.

have killed the patient. I missed it, but Miss Welland never misses anything. I should be more careful—be compelled to work more slowly—only I know that she is there to correct my mistakes.”

He smiled at her and went to work.

It was not perfect technique that startled Sloane at that moment. He had just concluded that he had found the flaw in this girl's perfection—she never smiled! That meant that she had bad teeth or an unpleasant smile—a disillusioning thing, either one.

Then it happened. She looked up into the keen face of the surgeon as he finished his generous tribute—met it with a frankly grateful smile, exclusive and utterly understanding.

Sloane gasped audibly and dropped back in his seat. That did settle it! It was not the flash of white teeth or the curve of her Cupid-bow lips, but the wealth of humor and breadth of understanding—all that a smile can show, that is rich and delightful—which made him admit that he was down and out for the count.

He wanted to kick a youthful M.D. nearby who whispered:

“How you goin’ t’ beat ‘er? You can’t. A ‘queen’ is right!”

It was dusk when the last case was wheeled out of the operating-room. The visiting doctors had gone, trailing after the great surgeon and revolving round him like satellites. The dimming operating-room was astir with subordinate nurses clearing up—rushing about with instruments and bloody towels. Through this Sloane dodged and apologized until he found the answer to the old conundrum about the irresistible force and the immovable body—it stops! He brought up against a big, Junoesque damsel in white who seemed to be a second in command.

“I beg your pardon! Do you suppose I might see Miss Welland now? I have a note of introduction from Dr. Carson. I’m the new pen croaker.”

She looked him over expertly, then laid a firm hand on his shoulder to head him aright.

“Dr. Corbin used to go right through that door—through the sterilizing-room to the dressing-room. Don’t ask permission, for you won’t get it.”

“Dressing-room?” Sloane hesitated. “I—She won’t be——”

“Room where we keep sterilized dressings, child!” she laughed. “Step lively, and don’t lose your nerve.”

“Thank you.”

He looked into the friendly face of the Amazon—she was a comely giantess—and smiled his best.

“Can you give a fellow another hint?”

“Don’t get fresh or make pretty speeches.”

“Thanks!”

He gripped her hand cordially, then blushed.

“And the Lord have mercy on you!” she threw over her shoulder with another flashing smile as she hurried away. She was a fine fellow!

He sidestepped two more helpers in white, bearing trays of instruments, who cast at him glances of interest and sympathy, then entered the glittering sterilizing-room. He was looking about him at the huge polished nickel cylinders and pressure-gages, summoning courage to go on, when she entered the opposite door.

She had taken off her operating-gown and in crisp white duck was more slenderly graceful than ever. She stepped swiftly from one shining valve to another, handling them with familiar ease as she turned to him a face of cool inquiry. At close range she was overwhelming—seemed to radiate a force and charm he could feel—but he began his speech:

“My name is Sloane. I have a note——”

“The new doctor at the pen,” she interrupted in a low voice that shook him. “Never mind the introduction; I am busy.”

Swinging open the end of a big cylinder—

“Besides, I don’t allow the doctors in here.”

“But Dr. Carson——” he began to protest, but she was ready for that.

“Dr. Carson was a gentleman—and engaged. He came to tell me about Her, and I liked that.”

“I am not—never was—engaged; and I can’t take a hint,” he informed her.

She made no comment on that, so he pocketed Carson’s note and asked—

“How did you know who I——”

“The girls saw you on the launch. They have been raving about you ever since. You are used to that, no doubt.”

She was disconcertingly sudden. Before he could recover she went on in answer to his remark about a hint:

“I have no time tonight anyhow. As soon

as I unpack these pads I am going home."

She stood up, beautifully flushed from the heat, to ask him—

"What do you want?"

"I wanted to—to know you. I am lonesome."

She turned away from him abruptly and slipped on some loose gloves. Her lips, seen in profile, curled slowly as she said:

"Oh, I see. You are that kind of a man."

"What kind?" he demanded.

"Soft. The kind that whines—that some women go crazy over; the kind I *hate!*" Her eyes flashed contempt at him. "You show it in your face."

She had shown human feeling! Suddenly he was at ease.

"Oh—my face!" He soberly pinched his chin, then drew one finger down his nose.

"Why, I've had compliments on this face."

"Precisely! That's what I said. A woman's man—I hate them. So if you came here to break my heart you are losing time."

She looked up at a dial, turned off the steam and opened another cylinder filled with brownish packages. He was watching the little bronze curls against the cream of her neck as he drawled—

"Of course, I didn't expect you'd love me *at sight.*"

The cream turned shell-pink, and she turned on him with such fury that he recoiled.

"You effeminate, insolent, cowardly—I'd like to see a real man knock you down. It's *just* what you need!"

"All right. When do we start?" Sloane brightened. "Let me help you unload those guns." He seized a large tray and looked about him. "A pair of those canvas gloves, please?"

And he went to work at once.

She did not speak until the tray was loaded. Then she said slowly:

"So you have been hearing things, and expect to be knocked down. Were you ever hit hard—knocked down properly?"

"Yes, ma'am," he answered. "This face of mine—it has started trouble before and taken the consequences."

With a quick glance at him she pressed her lips tight, making a cruel dimple in one cheek as she turned to take up the tray. He was before her, and their hands touched. She shrank from the contact with a silent contempt that made him flush hot, then glided before him into the small room

where packages were corded on shelves. She pointed to a wheel-litter.

"Set it there, and don't drop a package."

"I'm not a fool," he snapped.

"Only a coward."

"That remains to be proved."

They faced each other for a moment. His lips had drawn to a line and his eyes held hers level. Then she turned to put away the bundles, and he worked at her side. When the tray was empty he carried it back, and the oven was unloaded in the same silence. He was very careful not to touch her—walked round her with meticulous ostentation. As the first cylinder was finished the giantess appeared in the door to announce:

"We have finished the room and the instruments, Miss Welland. I will unpack the other digester if you want to go in town."

She gave Sloane a smile of honest liking and admiration which he returned.

"Very well, Miss Benn," said the head nurse coolly. "Dr. Sloane will stay and help you."

"But I want to see you home," Sloane protested. "I thought that was settled."

"If you are not afraid, you may."

And she went into the dressing-room. He looked at Miss Benn inquiringly. She shook her head and compressed her lips. When Miss Welland came out she had covered her white uniform with a long, hooded cloak, which left visible only her clear-cut profile and a wave of fine bronze hair. She moved with regal grace, bowing to her lieutenant.

"Good night, Miss Benn."

He paused to say, "Good night" to Miss Benn at the door, and the big nurse whispered hurriedly:

"Keep out of that house—and the clubhouse next door! But *she* is *all right.*"

"Thanks—again!"



HE OVERTOOK the graceful, gliding figure in the corridor, but no word was said until they had gone down the iron stairs and the granite steps. On the gravel walk she asked without turning her head—

"Just why do you force yourself on one who—dislikes you?"

The sound of her low voice, the nearness of her slender grace, the full lure of her presence made his voice play him tricks as he asked:

"Am I so repulsive then? Do you actually loathe the thought of—of contact?"

He was about to say more, but she stopped to flash up at him:

"You know better! You have found out your power over women. You know that you attract them. That's why I hate you and your kind."

"I never noticed it—that power stuff," he said sadly. "I know I am scared of them—the nice ones. I am scared right now."

"There you are, making sweet speeches. You do need a beating. I shall enjoy seeing you knocked down."

She walked on.

"Yes'm. I understand that."

He found he had to walk to keep pace with her easy, swinging stride. He commented on it admiringly.

"You have the gait of an athlete."

"I am. I can protect myself from most men without help," she said. "I need no escort, and I warn you that you will be sorry if you persist in following me home. You will be struck—knocked out probably—by a professional heavy-weight with a bad temper."

"Just for seeing you home?" he asked mildly.

"For persisting in annoying me," she corrected sharply. "Besides, I told you, Shad Kelly has a temper."

"Shad Kelly. Hm!" he said thoughtfully. "He meets Sharbett next week. Well, it will be done right then—the knock-down—and you will enjoy it, you say?"

"I shall. I love a good fighter—like to see one in action."

"Then I wouldn't disappoint you for anything," he told her calmly.

"You don't look frightened."

She glanced at him askant.

"Would you enjoy it more if I did?"

"N-no, I think not."

"Then the bleating of the lamb doesn't excite the tiger," was his mild comment.

She gave him another quick glance but kept silent until they were on a Second Avenue car. Then he ventured a question.

"Suppose you find you are mistaken in your opinion of me?"

"That's for you to prove," she responded so abruptly that he was startled.

Watching her clear profile and quiet figure beside him, he began to have disturbing thoughts. She did not shrink from

contact so coldly. When a lurch threw her against him she did not recoil at once. More passengers crowded them tight together, and still she did not move.

A young fellow in the seat just in front calmly put his arm around his girl, who snuggled against him happily. Sloane looked at the cool, creamy profile beside him, and she glanced up instantly with a smile! He was dizzy, but he set his teeth and sat tight. She had shrunk from him once as if he were a leper. Never again!

They were off the car and half a block across-town before he could decide whether he ought to be kicked or not. Had he shrunk cravenly from a challenge? At the next corner was a spacious intersection where a few fine old houses still stood in roomy dignity, witnesses that once the Best People had lived there. She pointed across to where two of the largest were built together.

"The one on the corner is the Nth Ward Athletic Club and Sparring Academy," she told him. "Shad Kelly runs it and teaches boxing. The other belonged to Patrick Thompson, my uncle. He died last Winter, and I live there with Mrs. Brady, the housekeeper. Kelly watches for me to come in, and he does not like my escorts, so you had better say, 'Good night' here."

She spoke with friendly warmth. He shook his head.

"That would be cheating—running away. You haven't had your fun yet."

"Don't be foolish." She smiled as she added:

"I admit I was trying you out, but I can see you are not that kind of a cad. You may not be a bruiser, but you are not scared. I will withdraw the 'coward' even. Thank you, and good night; but don't come again."

Sloane took the hand, warmed at the firm contact.

"Bless your heart!" he burst out. "But I have proved nothing, except perhaps that I didn't believe your threat. I insist on paying the price; it is worth it."

She drew her hand away, once more disdainful.

"I tell you I know a coward at sight. You are not one; but I want you to go away now—not to come again."

She left him and swiftly crossed the avenue; but Sloane overtook her on the opposite curb, explaining rapidly:

"I don't want to annoy you. I will go as soon as I have passed your door and taken my medicine as nominated in the bond."

She drew herself up proudly.

"Then you don't believe me?" she said with scorn. "I tell you, Kelly is a hard-hitting fighter. He could kill you with one blow. If he beats Sharbett he will fight the champion. You may get your face spoiled forever."

"Perhaps you'd like it better that way," he said quickly. "I'm not so fond of it as it is—just gets me in trouble. Wait until you see how nicely I can take a knockout."

And he smiled his reckless smile. She bit her lip and turned away to the steps of the corner house.

"I thought you said this was the clubhouse," Sloane said carelessly.

"I go in this way when I am—followed. There is a way through. Come in if you doubt me; I *want* to see you beaten now."

Without another look at him she led the way up the steps, opened the door and went in. Sloane followed closely. He found himself in a wide, lighted hall with foils and crossed arms on the walls. The girl looked at the hats on a rack in the corner before she turned to Sloane.

"He is in the gym—will come in in a minute; but you can still go if you want to. You have carried your point and passed the door."

"But not taken my knockout," Sloane said rather wearily.

She lowered her head and looked at him from under long lashes with a faint smile.

"You insist on paying. I like that. You ought to have something to pay for. Come!"

She turned abruptly, opened a door and looked back to see that he followed. In a daze he passed through a small reception-room, through another door in a thick wall, and they were in the hall of the house adjoining—her home. He looked about at the rich but homelike furnishings, at the open door that gave on a library beyond; but no one was in sight but the girl. She had thrown off her wrap and stepped toward him—close—with her tilted face smiling.

Slowly, incredulously, he put out his arms and she came into them, still smiling the same trusting smile. He kissed her once, and the touch of her lips made him tremble; then she disengaged herself with the same gentle dignity. He looked at her

as if she had become suddenly unearthly, unreal, and he heard a heavy voice behind him—

"Another one, eh?"

In the open door stood a man in sleeveless jersey and trousers, smiling a tight and threatening smile. There was nothing effeminate about the newcomer. He was every inch a fighter. His forehead was low and retreating, his eyes too close together; but his square jaw and muscular torso told Sloane he was facing Shad Kelly. Kelly was sizing him up with contempt.

"Such a sweet face, too—a shame to spoil it." He grinned as he stepped forward. "And he got fresh, did he?"

"Not exactly," said the girl. "That is, he had provocation. He is not to blame."

She flushed, but not with embarrassment.

"You wonder!" Sloane burst out to his own surprise, then said to Kelly: "I forced myself upon her, followed her home against her will, and I am ready to take my punishment."

"You'll get it." Kelly came another step. "Shall I take him to the boxing-room, Miss Barbara?"

Sloane spoke up promptly:

"Miss Welland would like to see it. Let's get it over."

"Put up your hands!"

Kelly dropped into an easy pose.

"I'm not doing the hitting," Sloane said incisively. "That's your end."

His face was coldly scornful.

"Don't keep the lady waiting!" he added.

"You have nerve; I give you that." Kelly's eyes narrowed. "And some muscle. If you had any sand you'd make a fair middleweight, but you're a sissy. Just the same I can't hit a man with his hands down."

"You have some of the instincts of a gentleman then," said Sloane. "So, just to oblige you——"

With a lightning movement he slapped Kelly's face hard. The response came like a rebound.

Smack—chuck!

Kelly's fist landed on Sloane's jaw-angle, and he went down like a log. He lay half on his back with eyes closed.

"Stand back, Kelly, you utter brute!"

The girl darted to the fallen man and felt his heart quickly, then looked up at the fighter with eyes flashing.

"You struck a horrible blow. Did you want to kill the boy?" she asked angrily.

"Kill nothing!" Kelly growled. "And he's no such a kid, for all his baby skin. I thought you wanted these fresh mashers trimmed so they'd give you room. What is this guy? Is there anything in it?"

"No. You don't know a gentleman when you see one."

She dropped her eyes to Sloane's face and wiped his lips with a ridiculous little handkerchief.

"So! Got a yen for him already; he must work fast!" Kelly's face darkened venomously. "Next time I'll lean on it good and plenty. Kiss him good-by right now while you're in a clinch; you won't want to when I get through with the bird. He's comin' out!"

The girl rose and stepped back as Sloane stirred and opened his eyes. She watched him take his time about getting on his feet, and she seemed to fear what he would say to her, for she flushed as she met his eyes—then turned away.

Sloane looked about, picked up his hat from the chair where he had dropped it and then turned to her with a thin-lipped smile.

"If the lady is satisfied, perhaps she will give me her hand as a sign of her restored favor."

And he held out his own hand confidently. Flushing and wide-eyed, the girl laid her hand in his—a cool, firm, little hand that seemed to beat and flutter.

Deliberately he bowed over it, pressed it to his lips and slowly released it. As he stood up to his full height he held her eyes with his own and said:

"Good night, my lady. I thank you for a pleasant evening."

Turning to Kelly, he flashed a wide smile that showed all his white, strong teeth.

"Good night, Mr. Kelly. I hope we shall meet again."

With another low bow to the girl and a shorter one to Kelly he walked firmly to the street-door, opened it himself and gently closed it behind him.

V



AT NIGHT the prison was in charge of "Nice-Day" Devery, the assistant head keeper. After supper and his regular round of the prison he climbed the long spiral stairs to the hospital for a chat with Lawson, the gentlemanly little night

hospital keeper, who got up wonderful evening dinners for himself and the doctor by pooling their rations and applying his skill with chafing-dish and salad-fork. Dr. Carson had started this custom and Sloane had been glad to keep it up; but on this second night Sloane was late. Devery found the little man fussing anxiously with a saucepan in an air of excellent coffee and worriment.

"Evening, me lord. Nice evening!" Devery saluted in the doorway of the office. "Howcome you're so late? Little Willie hasn't shown up? Naughty boy!"

"No—not yet." Lawson looked up, frowning. "I'm afraid he's got himself sandbagged or something. He seems to be the sort that is always there when things happen."

"I'd say he had enough happen to him yesterday to last a month," said Devery. "Riley says the blood was knee-deep in the ward here. Then doc and Jawn has a run-in, and now you can't get the dep to say a word about the new croaker. How d'you size him up, me lord?"

Devery took his seat in the corner.

"I don't—haven't had time," Lawson answered cautiously. "He's as handsome a young chap as I ever saw, but that ought not to count against him. He looks to me like a thoroughbred. What's the gossip on the tiers about him?"

"A plenty," Devery said; "and all kinds. He's a rich swell and a cowboy and a duke in disguise and one o' the Blackbeard gang."

He cocked his head to listen. "Here he comes now!"

Devery's ears were famous. It was a full minute before a step was audible on the stairs. Sloane entered, fresh and bright-eyed, sniffing with relish.

"That sure does smell like home," he announced. "Good evening, Mr. Devery. Have some of that steak with us."

"Many thanks, your grice, but I dined at the club. No—honest, doc, I can't eat; but we were just figuring it out you'd got shanghai'd or blackjacked in town."

Sloane sat down and got to work.

"Nothing like that—not much like that," he corrected himself. "I got a neat push on the button that put me out for a pair of minutes, but it didn't even swell up. I used hot water. Does it show?"

He tilted an active jaw for inspection. Devery felt it carefully.

"Just a little bunch—a mere nothing," Devery grinned, "I suppose an old bare-knuckle Jem Mace like you don't mind a knockout any more than the Professor would. Where is that old Munchawson anyhow? Hear his latest? He sure can lie the birds off the treeses!"

"What is it?"

Lawson wrinkled his eyes as he grinned.

"You didn't hear about his yacht?"

Devery feigned breathless interest.

"Well, Barber's big yacht went up toward the Sound this afternoon, and Walsh asked the Professor if it was his or if he had sold it.

"No, sir." The Professor swells up solemn.

"But I helped design her sister ship, J. M. Pierpont's *Buccaneer*—same lines exactly," he says. They been guyin' him about those 'same lines' all afternoon, but it never fazes him."

Devery concluded—

"You can't lose that bird!"

"He'll hear you!" Lawson warned softly. "He's reading out there now."

"Course he is—reading and listening; rubbering all the time. I'll be glad when he goes out next week."

"He's a mighty good druggist anyhow," Sloane said, "and he talks like a man of education. I like to hear him; and he is never smutty."

Later, Sloane was to recall this rather thoughtless speech at a time when it counted.

"But he is the biggest coward and bluff in this country," Lawson averred. "I believe half this talk about Blackbeard in the prison here is just made up to scare the Professor."

"Mm-mm!"

Devery made a quick double-grunt of warning, shaking his head with a serious frown the while:

"Ss-st! Not so loud! The dep gave me a straight tip to cut out all that talk. The tiers are getting worse—more jumpy about it—and he wants it stopped."

Coming from cheery, reckless Devery, this was sobering talk. Lawson looked startled and leaned forward to whisper—

"Does the dep take any stock in it—that Blackbeard is in the prison himself?"

"Na-ah!" Devery came back with scorn but in the same subdued whisper. "But he says one of his spies might be. That's the report on the tiers now, and it keeps

going. I have seen scares strike the prison and wear off in a day or two, but I never knew a story to stick like this one has unless there was *some* truth behind it. That's straight!"

"By George!" Lawson's eyes were round as saucers. "I don't like that!"

"What is this fable?" Sloane spoke when he had come to coffee and cheese. "Who and what is this Blackbeard?"

"Easy!" warned Devery. "Not so loud! Nobody knows what he looks like. He runs his frame-up by letter, makes his strikers return all his written orders, and he can write like anybody you please. He pays well for having his work done, and his workers never get caught or have any trouble unless they puke;* then they croak! Quick!"

"He kills them if they tell, you mean?" Sloane asked. "But—how? Why isn't he arrested?"

"You tell," said Devery. "He does it by some quick poison. But they have to catch him first, and you can't find anybody who ever saw him. Not so easy!"

"How does all this come to be known then?"

"One yegg did a job for him—croaked a coal-passer†—" Devery told it in whispers—"who had just made a haul, and got five thousand for the job. He swelled up and bragged about it to a pal; then he got a warning in writing. He was so scared he lifted a watch to get sent over here, where he thought he'd be safe. But on the day set for his finish he was found dead in his cell. That is on record."

Devery got up suddenly before he had fairly finished and turned at the door to whisper—

"I don't mind saying that I feel safer the less I say about that guy."

Then he was gone.

"I think that's the first time I ever saw Nice-Day Devery look scared."

Lawson hardly spoke above a whisper.

"But if this Blackbeard only kills crooks," Sloane said argumentatively, "what is everybody scared of?"

"I don't know; of this unknown poison of his perhaps." Lawson looked about him uneasily and explained:

"They call it 'the Lightning Death' because it kills like lightning; but they never

*"Puke:" "Holler," "squeal" or turn State's evidence.
† Coal-passer: Diamond thief.

can tell how it gets there. Anyhow what's the use running any risk when you have no reason for it?"

"If I had any reason for it I'd go after him and say so out loud," declared the young doctor, pushing away from the table. "That was a great salad!"

"Take my advice and keep quiet about it for four days, doctor!" came a low, distinct voice from the door.

The Professor poked in his pompadoured head to add—

"After that you won't be interested."

"What do you mean by that, you prophet of evil?" demanded Lawson. "That he won't be here? Or that he will be——"

"Dead?" Sloane finished as Lawson paused.

"Not a bit of it," the Professor answered importantly. "He will be alive and kicking—very much so; but he will have his hands full elsewhere. You remember what I say!"

Lawson wrinkled his eyes genially.

"Yes—we all know you tell nothing but the truth!" he said with sarcasm.

"All right!"

Smiling his hurt, embarrassed smile, the Professor withdrew with the final charge—

"All right; ask Aunt Mary!"

"I believe I'll do that thing!"

Sloane got up with determination just as a knock came on the door behind Lawson's chair—the door to the women's ward.

"Aunt Mary is having a bad spell with her rheumatism," said Mrs. Donovan. "She has been listening for the doctor for an hour."

Lawson looked at the doctor with startled eyes and whispered as he passed:

"That darned Professor is spooky! Ask her about this Blackbeard business."

Sloane nodded and followed the young matron. The famous diamond operator sat up in bed and nodded her nightcap briskly.

"I knew she was a spy, that there Miriam, or some kind of 'gun-moll,' so I 'ad a talk with the 'ead matron, and she made 'er sleep down-stairs," Aunt Mary began. "Don't look at me; I'm a sight! And make it short and sweet. Nobody can rubber on us 'ere. Did you get inside 'er 'ouse?"

"Yes. But I didn't see anybody but her—until Kelly came."

"Blushin' again!" Aunt Mary noted keenly. "Don't you care! Did he 'it you? Did you 'it 'im?" she asked rapidly.

"I slapped his face; he knocked me down neatly, and I said, 'Good night.'"

"Good lad! I am wise to you, my son. I can pick a winner, and you're my fahncy for this race. We may get back some o' your roll yet. But your play is to follow 'er up."

It was hard to keep up with Aunt Mary's broken remarks, but Sloane brightened and then asked:

"You don't mean that *she* had anything to do with robbing him? That's absurd! Have you ever seen her?"

"No."

Waving aside all protests, she went on:

"Was this Dave person marked so 'e could be easy spotted? Strawberry-mark or anythink to hidentify 'im?"

"Yes—tattooed on his left hand and a scar on his temple. He had been to sea——"

"Ah! Good enough!" interrupted the old lady. "Now I warn you this is a dangerous job, but if you follow this gerl and don't lose your nerve I back you to win. I mean you may get your *gelt* if you don't want the gerl worse."

She saw Sloane get white and grim about the lips as he protested:

"She *can't* be mixed up with any crooks. And this Blackbeard gang; what could be her part in any such——"

"'Er part! She'd be the bait—the ringer-in for the fall guy, o' course!" she said impatiently. "They'd only use 'er for big game——"

Sloane broke in.

"But I tell you I *know* she's as pure as——"

"Ah—so much the better, if she wasn't wise!"

She waved him aside again:

"Keep in touch with 'er, and w'en you're sure you 'ave got 'er, ahsk 'er if she saw a man with a tattooed 'and and a scar on 'is cheek. See?"

Aunt Mary leaned forward to pat his hand impressively.

"But be sure you 'ave a getaway all framed before you spring your question!"

She dropped back on her pillow and pulled up the clothes.

"I'm sleepy. Good night, and good luck!"



FOR three days Sloane did not succeed in getting a word with Barbara Welland. At the hospital he twice found she had gone home early. The third day she did not come to work, and he went in town to the house on First

Avenue only to find it closed and shuttered. At the adjoining club-house he was roughly told to keep away if he wanted to avoid trouble. He told Aunt Mary he was afraid she was right—that there was something crooked going on in that house.

"That's no news," she told him placidly. "Don't you care; time is pahssing. Something is sure to break soon. Did you ask at the 'ospital?"

"Yes. They said she'd be there tomorrow, and I'll see her or bust something."

In the prison his work went smoothly for these three days. He got in his hour at Senter's Gymnasium every afternoon, afterward walking all the way down-town to take a long look at the shuttered windows of the suspected house.

Once he saw a colored man come out of the club-house basement—so big and powerful that he looked like a clothed gorilla; and the negro came across the street to give him a wicked look. Then he went back into the basement door he had come from with a last backward look at Sloane that stuck in the doctor's memory.

It was on the morning of the fourth day that things began to happen again.

"Good mornin' t'ye, doc!" bluff and hearty old Kinney greeted him as he entered the prison lobby before sick line. "Say, doc—" he came to take Sloane by the arm and led him aside, rumbling soberly—"this Blackbeard scare is gettin' worse all the time. The tiers are noisy all night, and the dep's cranky from lack of sleep. He says the prison discipline is goin' t' the dogs.

"Then last night what does one lad on the second tier do but go bug-house entirely! He kep' the prison jumpin' with the yells of him. He claims he has got his warnin' in writin', and this Blackbeard is goin' to croak him for squealin'!"

"Why didn't they call me," Sloane asked, "so I could give him something to quiet him? I can't be blamed for that."

"Nobody's blamin' ye, doctor. It's not that at all."

Kinney laid a kindly hand on Sloane's shoulder and added:

"The Professor got um qui'ted; he's no such fool, that fat lad. But this mornin' Clark—the bug-house lad—was at it again. And that ain't the wor-rst of it, doc!"

The old head keeper took his stand in

front of Sloane and dropped his voice to a deeper rumbling whisper.

"He's got the bug that ye're the man that's goin' to croak um—Blackbeard himself, d'ye see! That's why Devery didn't call ye in the night. What'll we do with um?"

Kinney's brogue showed his worryment.

"Put him in isolated if he keeps yelling," Sloane suggested offhand.

Kinney stared at him in stunned dismay and slowly growled:

"By golly, doc, I never thought of it! And all the crazy men I've put in there! But I was thinkin' ye'd have to examine him, and we'd have a ruckus in sick line," explained the old warrior. "He's scared o' yeh."

"What got him started on that tack, do you suppose? Why did he pick on me?"

Kinney fished in his pocket and pulled out a soiled bit of paper. On it Sloane read, written with a pencil—

You get yours on the 13th before midnight—B.

"That looks like my writing," Sloane said, holding it to the light. "But it is not. I don't make an S like that. Somebody is playing a joke on Clark. Transfer him to the hospital up-stairs; maybe I can talk him out of it. I am sorry for the poor chap, and I hate to shut him up in isolated."

"We will do it now, doc."

Kinney called two keepers by holding up a hand. Having despatched them after the insane man, he told Sloane:

"Somebody must 'a' told him some of that, doc. How would he know your writing? But I'm thinkin' ye'll have to send him to isolated after all. He's too wild entirely to listen to reason."

The man certainly looked it. He was brought down from his cell without any disturbance, but at sight of Sloane he began to pull back and protest:

"Don't let the doc near me! Keep him off!"

He raised his hoarse voice to a scream, then appealed to the head keeper:

"Mr. Kinney, put me in dark cell—any place; but don't let doc get to me. Please, sir! He will give me the Lightning Death. Please!"

He shook, and his knees buckled. Sloane turned away, and Kinney tried to pacify the man.

"Whisht, man! Stop your noise, I tell ye! Doc will give ye nothin' at all. Go up to hospital quietely, and if ye want I'll put ye in isolated after sick line. Now stop your yellin'!"

The final roar paralyzed the shivering creature, and he was led off, staring back at Sloane with wide-eyed terror.

"You're right, Mr. Kinney," Sloane admitted. "After the men have gone out to the quarry after lunch, we might as well have him put in isolated. There is the bell for sick line now."

All during sick line, moreover, Sloane could see fear in the eyes of every man who came up in line—in the eyes of every man in the lockstep gangs as they filed past. Then too the dep stalked in and barely nodded to him as he passed. Sloane began to get the square-jawed and grim look on his face that meant he was in a tight place.

Sick line finished, he passed the bunch of keepers, who still stared at him as a curiosity, and he thought there was more nudging and whispering than usual. When he had found nothing to do on the women's side he went to his lunch in a gloomy mood. But the mulatto girl Mary was not the silent-staring kind.

"Ma goodness, doctah, I ain't done nothin'!" she exploded before he had fairly taken his seat. "Yo-all look like you goin' bite ma haid spang off! Y'ain't mad at me, is you, doc?"

He saw that her hand trembled as she set down his soup, and he looked up with a smile of relief that made Mary find her flash all her white teeth in delight.

"Not a bit of it, Mary. It's just the other way round. I am glad to see somebody who looks glad to see me. Have you heard any of this talk about me and the Lightning Death?"

"No—~~suh!~~ Ah ain't listen to none o' thishyeh triffin' po'-white-trash talk—no-how! Ah ain't seen no real quality folks roun' thishyeh prison 'cept'n yo'all an' Mis' Donovan an' that gal what they call Mirry-am. Balance of 'em sho' do make my eyes ache—yass, s'! Prison stew mighty good today, doctah. Lemme get you some? Jes' a li'l bit?"

She was gone and back with the steaming stew in a joyful hurry and planted herself opposite to revel in his enjoyment while she let her talk run loose. In her present

happiness she reverted to the fright he had given her at first.

"Sakes alaiwe! When yo'all done come in yeh lookin' at me thataway, gooseflesh done crawl all up ma back, jes' lak a 'possum walkin' oveh ma grave! Isn't you feelin' good, suh?"

"Fine, thank you. Don't I eat like it? This stew is good, Mary. I am obliged to you."

And he smiled.

"Tha's allraight, suh!"

Mary beat his smile by an inch.

"I laikes to do fo' sho'-nuough quality—does so! Ah ain't used— Lawdy! Listen at that! Wha's all thishyeh shoutin' an' ruckus?"

She ran to the open window, through which men's voices had come suddenly in short, excited barks. The bars would not permit her head to pass, but she pressed her face to them.

"Some-body shout down from hos-pittle!" she reported. "Say to Mist' Mac-manus as how crazy-man done bus' loose up yondeh! Say he got a gun an' shootin' up hos-pittle! Lawdy-Lawd! Listen at that!"

A sharp report, muffled by distance, came from the upper regions. To Sloane, who had reached the window by that time, it sounded like a .45, fired in the men's ward two stories above. The only way was down through the lower hall, and he started on the run with Mary's clear voice pursuing:

"Don't go gettin' yo'self shot up, doc! They ain't wuth it; passel o' po'-white——"

He was in the hall. The dep's door opposite was open, and Murphy himself was on the stairs ahead of him, taking three at a stride. Sloane went him two better and passed him at the bottom.

Here they collided with McManus, who had bulged in from outdoors, puffing but still dignified. Murphy rebounded from the doorkeeper's portly bulk and demanded:

"What t' —, Mac? What you howling round outside for?"

Mac gasped for air.

"Listen—depity!" he wheezed. "I hear a yell up-stairs and run out— This fat fella—Profissor—hollers:

"'Crazy Clark's got Stronsky's gun; shootin' up the ward!' says he. 'Nobody can get in or out!' he says.

"I think Clark has got a cinch on the strat-tee-gic sittivation, depity. *Whoosh!*"

"Come on—call Devery! Where's Michael?"

Murphy disregarded Sloane and started for the prison lobby. But in the doorway he ran afoul old Kinney, the head keeper, holding by the arm a big prisoner in stripes—Condon.

"Wait a minute, Jawn!" boomed the old lion. "No need to tear your shirt. We got to do a bit o' headwork—hear what this lad has to say."

With a surprisingly quick movement he turned and caught Sloane by the arm.

"Don't do it, doc! You'll only get full o' lead."

He held to the doctor, who had started back toward the women's side, with the intention of going up through the women's ward. In a lower tone he added—

"It's yourself he is gunnin' for, doc!"

Murphy, still ignoring Sloane, turned to Condon abruptly.

"Tell it quick if you can talk."

Condon proved he could talk, to the point:

"Stronsky, the Jewish keeper, came up to take the ward while Riley was at luncheon. We were trying to keep Clark quiet. He was shouting—

"'Doc will poison me before morning!'

"Stronsky says to him—

"'Sure he will—a good job too.'

"He turned his back, and Clark grabbed the gun Stronsky wore on his hip. Then Clark jumped into the corner by the stair-head door and held up the ward. He is in that corner now, where he commands both doors, shouting he will shoot any man who tries to get out or in, until he has got the doctor. And he can shoot! I came down to warn the doctor," he finished calmly.

"Good work!" Sloane burst out warmly. "How did you get out?"

"I saw the door open a crack, and I dived for it on my stomach," Condon explained solemnly. "I fancied he'd shoot high like any novice, but he very nearly got me."

He looked at the shoulder of his coat, torn by the bullet.

"There's one man on the job anyhow," Murphy declared sardonically. "You think he is sure to hit any man who shows himself in either door?"

"Yes, sir. I do," said Condon. "Both doors are in front of him in easy range. The windows are barred, even if we had ladders to reach them."

Murphy nodded, then drew a long breath.

"Well," he sighed, "here's where some-

body has got to get drilled. There's just one thing to do—rush him from both doors at once and go shooting. He may open the ball any time himself, so the quicker the sooner. Who volunteers?"

"I." "I." "I," came a chorus from the knot of keepers gathered.

Devery was the foremost in the line, and old Kinney's bass boomed through the other voices.

"Three on either side is enough!" proclaimed the old fellow. "More will only step on our feet. Devery, do you pick——"

"No you don't, Michael!" Murphy raised an impressive hand. "Give us kids a chance to——"

"One moment, gentlemen!"

All eyes swung to Sloane in surprise. He had spoken in a low but clear tone that had an arresting quality, and his handsome face was quietly dominating as he turned to Murphy.

"I think I can disarm Clark without hurting him much. I may have to wing him, but I can guarantee there will be no death-list—almost guarantee it."

"Just hold him with your eagle eye while you take his gun away, I suppose," Murphy sneered. "No, thanks!"

"No, seh!"

Sloane's Southern speech came to the surface. He went on with a sort of dignity that commanded belief—

"I can shoot his gun out of his hand without hurting him above the wrist."

He turned to Condon and asked—

"Does he shoot from the hip?"

Condon replied promptly:

"No. Holds his gun at the shoulder, pointing up, then throws down on his mark."

"Just a moment. I'll get my own gun; I am used to it."

He was off up the stairs to his room, leaving a bunch of surprised men in the hall looking at one another in silence.

"What do you think, Michael?" Murphy asked.

"I dunno, Jawn. -He talks like he knew his business."

"So does the Professor," Murphy sniffed. "But let him try it; it's his hunt."

"Here he comes with a real gun."

Kinney looked from under shaggy brows with keen pleasure in his blue eyes—pleasure at the sight of the young man bounding down the stairs.

 SLOANE had his revolver, Betsy, in his hand—his left hand—and his look was one of elation. He took command as if by right.

"Devery, if you and Condon will go up the men's side to the door of the ward, take off your shoes when you come to the wooden steps and wait at the door until you hear me shoot. See? When you hear his gun fall on the floor rush him! That's all. Got it?"

"Sure! Good leather!"

Devery repeated his orders:

"We wait at the door up there until you shoot, listen for his gun to fall and climb him before he can move. Easy!"

He turned to Murphy cheerily.

"All right, dep?"

"I'm willing," admitted Murphy seriously. "Get up to your post. Kinney and I will go up the women's side with the doctor. Ready, Sloane?"

"And waiting, sir."

Sloane's answer was a bit stiff.

Devery and Condon had started through the men's side already. Murphy and the old head keeper now followed Sloane through the hall to the women's prison. They did not stop to answer the anxious question in the eyes of the head matron who let them through, but went up the iron stairs without a word. Sloane climbed with noticeable deliberation. As they entered the almost empty women's ward at the top Murphy spoke with an effort.

"I want to say one thing, doc. You have got nerve, and I wish you luck. Of course he has an even chance to *get you!*"

The dep's hard-bitten face was grimly alight with reluctant admiration. Sloane shook his head with an indulgent little smile—almost a fatherly smile.

"Not an even chance. I shall shoot *first!*"

He turned at once to Mrs. Donovan, who was in charge of the ward, with the direction—

"Just keep well toward the other end, please."

She obeyed, pale but quiet, and Sloane turned to Kinney, who was peeping through the keyhole.

"Is he right opposite the door, Mr. Kinney?"

"Right square across," Kinney whispered, tiptoeing back. "Within two yards of the other door—in the corner in front of the windah. Hear him holler?"

Listening, they heard the high, tense voice of the demented Clark shouting:

"Back there! Don't try creeping up! I'll get that — croaker—I'll get him!"

Just then Aunt Mary came limping from the far end of the ward, followed by the beautiful spy Miriam, to protest to Sloane:

"Don't be foolish, doctor. Plug the yegg through a crack! Hopen the door just enough to poke your gun through and let 'im 'ave it!"

"No." Sloane shook his head, still smiling. "*Splinters—eyes—and no good anyhow.* Besides I want foot-room and a clean, balanced shot. Back out of line please—farther back. That'll do."

As Sloane turned to face the door with easy confidence the risk of the uneven contest struck the dep full force. The smooth-faced youth proposed to hit the size of a man's fist at forty feet, while the other man had for a mark the whole body! It struck the other onlookers too, and each responded in his way.

The dep took a quick step forward and opened his mouth. Kinney threw up his head like the old war-horse he was and squared his shoulders. The girl called Miriam clapped the back of one hand to her mouth and bit it, wide-eyed and pale, while Aunt Mary simply smiled proudly and watched Sloane's face.

It had become cold and steel-hard. In a low, even voice he gave his orders before Murphy could speak:

"Turn the key in the door and stand ready, Mr. Kinney. No noise. When I say, 'Now!' swing it wide open and keep behind it. They must be up on the other side. Are you ready?"

He took his stand well away from the door, holding his Colt by the middle in his left hand, butt up and ready to his gun-hand, low down by his hip. His right hand hovered over it; he worked his fingers lightly. Again the dep had an impulse to call out—to stop this foolishness; but he found his mouth dry and numb.

Sloane made a spirited picture, lightly poised and alert, and he suddenly became a statue, handsome and motionless. The hand over the gun-butt froze still.

The dep heard a low, even voice from somewhere:

"Ready, Mr. Kinney? *Now!*"

With a click of the lock the door swung wide.

It seemed to the dep as if he could count three before anything happened.

Then a high shout from beyond:

"—— you, I got——" *Crash!*

He saw the gun leap in Sloane's hand with the deafening report—saw the vicious dart of flame at the level of Sloane's hip, slanting up.

The next instant everybody was in motion. Sloane was running through the office and calling:

"His other arm, Devery. Hold him! That's right. All over, gentlemen!"

Clark, struggling with Devery and Condon, was trying to get farther away from Sloane.

"Stop it, man!" Sloane said patiently. "Can't you see I don't want to hurt you? Let's see your hand."

Then as Clark kept up his pulling away—

"Bruce, see if his hand is hurt."

The little South Boston tough made a quick and deft examination.

"Fancy work, doctor! Not a nick on it. You must have hit square on the end of the butt when he held the muzzle up."

Bruce's eyes were wide with astonishment and admiration as he looked up to ask:

"Are you a Herrmann too, doctor? Did you spirit the gun away entirely, or shoot it to pieces?"

"No! Went out the window!"

The Professor came down front, as crisp and oracular as ever now the danger was over. Search proved Sloane was right. The revolver had been knocked out of the open window behind Clark as he stood. When it was brought up to be examined it was found that it had been hit just above the trigger-guard.

"An inch high," Sloane commented. "But good enough for a man out of practise."

A dozen keepers and all the men convalescents had gathered round Sloane in a whispering and admiring crowd, looking at the bullet-mark, telling one another of the wonderful shot, while through the office in the open door of the women's ward peeped a knot of still more ardent admirers. For the time all discipline was suspended. Kirby alone of all the inmates, the man Sloane had saved when he was bleeding to death from a gashed throat, kept aloof and growled sarcastic comments to any one who would listen.

The dep had stood a little apart, watching

Sloane thoughtfully. He now stepped forward to the office door where all could see and hear and held up his hand.

"Men!" he called loudly. "We are all loafing on the job. Before we go back to work I want you all to hear me make a public apology to Dr. Sloane."

He was rather white from stage-fright, but he turned to Sloane with a fine dignity as he said—

"Doctor, I take off my hat to you."

He removed his faithful derby and passed it to his left hand that he might offer the other as he said:

"You are the best man of all, and I have not treated you right. Will you forget it and start over?"

Sloane turned rich red, stepped quickly forward and wrung the dep's hand. He could not speak; but the grip he gave Murphy made that gentleman, husky hand-shaker though he was, wince and grin. His embarrassment was covered by an outburst of hand-clapping. It was led by the Professor, of course.

"Now then, men!" called old Kinney in his bass roar. "Back to your places!"

In two minutes the ward had resumed its usual afternoon neatness and calm, except for the terrified Clark, who still kept his wide eyes on Sloane.

"Now what about this poor ——, doc?" Kinney asked. "Is he scared to death or just plain crazy? And what will we be doin' with him?"

"He seems a little of both," Sloane said. "And since he's so scared of me, why not put him in isolated until after midnight? Nobody can get at him there. I will keep away, and he may straighten out when he finds he's still alive."

"If he is still alive!" came the low comment—the Professor again!

"Who told you to butt in, yuh fat walkin' funeral?" Kinney rumbled. "What's eatin' yuh?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but you know what has happened to every man who has got one of those warnings."

The fat man smiled his hurt, thick-lipped smile. "It's none of my business, of course ——"

"Then keep your trap shut!" Murphy barked in. "I think doc is right. Put him in isolated where the —— himself can't get at him, and maybe we'll have some peace."

The two keepers started off with Clark, who made no resistance, and old Kinney put in the thoughtful order:

"Riley, send a man with bread and water. He'll be dhry."

Riley, who had got back to his post, looked round for an idle orderly.

"You Kirby! You can carry a quart cup; make yerself useful."

So the man with the strapped wound in his throat followed with the cup and loaf.

At last the crazy Clark was disposed of for the time where he would disturb nobody. The dep still waited, looking about the ward, and Riley asked—

"Anything I can do, dep?"

He felt rather guilty because he was not on duty when Clark broke loose. But the dep answered cordially—

"You can *that*, Riley."

He put a hand on Riley's shoulder.

"Keep that fat, long-eared drug-orderly away from the office. I want a word with the doc and Kinney in there. You stand guard at the door."

"Sure! Here, you, keep to the far end o' the ward!"

Riley shooed the Professor and Walsh before him and took his stand at the door. As they went down the ward Walsh's hoarse, mournful voice could be heard, guying the fat man—

"Say, Prof., could your chum the Texas Kid beat that shot?"

And the Professor's irritated protest:

"I never said I saw him. You'd have more sense if you read the papers!"

"No? Now I thought you and the James boys—" came Walsh's soothing drawl.

And then they passed out of earshot. Kinney's blue eyes twinkled as he followed Murphy and the doctor into the office.

"What'll they do for somebody to be raggin' all the time after tomorra, I dunno?" he said to the deputy warden. "There's a batch of them goes out the same day."

But Murphy was too much absorbed to hear him. When all three were inside the office the dep set his jaw for a difficult job. He first got his audience seated.

"Take the big chair, Michael. I'll sit on the radiator. Now, doc, I promised the chief of detectives—Brine; you saw him—I'd ask you a couple o' measly questions. You can tell me to go plumb *to*, if you like, but it's on this case of your friend that was

robbed, so maybe you will be interested enough to——"

"Don't apologize," Sloane broke in. "Since Train was my partner and carrying every dollar we both had, certainly I am interested."

"Tough luck, doc! You didn't tell Brine that," the dep sympathized.

"I didn't want to clutter up the case with my affairs," explained Sloane. "But what does he want to know about me? He doesn't suspect I clubbed Dave, or that I am this Blackbeard poisoner?"

Murphy was serious in his reply:

"Not exactly, but he is working on the exclusion method, as he calls it, and checking up on everybody in sight. Beginning back four years ago, where were you that Summer, do you remember?"

Sloane nodded quickly.

"In the Klondike with Train," said he. "Dave could testify to that."

"And right now—this is none of my business—what do you do afternoons?"

"At Senter's gymnasium. Yesterday I helped out Martin with his class."

"Fine!" The dep's hard face lighted up. "A good friend of mine, Jem Martin, if he is a Britisher. So that's how-come those shoulder-muscles on you, doc. Now there's just one date—I guess it's when something special happened here in New York. I got it here. Yes; the third of May, four years ago. Can you show you were not here then?"

Old Kinney leaned forward to listen.

"The third of May?" Sloane thought only a second. "That was just before—Why, yes! I was in Denver that night, and your friend Jem Martin saw me there. He can swear to it."

Old Kinney leaned back with a long breath.

"That *night*?" Murphy questioned. "You are sure of the date?"

"Perfectly sure. It was the night of the fight—Kendal and the Texas Kid. I was there, and Martin saw me."

Sloane's eyes dodged at the last.

"Did he tell you so—lately?" Murphy's face darkened again. "How do you know he saw you? Did you know him then?"

Sloane looked out of the window.

"No. I never met him until this last Summer," he admitted wearily.

"Then how do you know he can swear he saw you there?" Murphy persisted. "I'm not doing this for myself, you know, doc."

"Oh, well—" Sloane faced him with a one-sided smile—"I rather wanted to keep dark about it, but I may as well own up."

Here old Kinney looked as if he had heard bad news and gripped his chair-arm as Sloane explained:

"I did not make a business of it—it was just to raise a stake so we could go into the gold country, and that was the quickest way. I know Martin saw me, because he told me so. He saw the fight, saw the Texas Kid put out Kendal, and I—was the Texas Kid."



THERE was a hush of utter disaster in the office. Then old Kinney let out a long breath through his nose as he slipped back and down in his chair. Resting on his shoulder-blades, he looked up at his friend Murphy with a face of resigned surrender. Murphy slowly turned his own stunned gaze from Sloane to the old head keeper, who thereupon sadly scratched one ear. Murphy's grim features broke up in a quizzical grin while he growled:

"Get up off your back, you ould tarrier, and go on about your business. Don't be poking fun at me; you knew no more about it than I did."

"I have a notion your friend the chief is the wise man," Sloane put in. "I thought at times he suspected something, from the way he looked. But I am glad to know he is still working on Train's case. Has he discovered anything, do you know?"

"I don't— He— I beg pardon?" The dep was still staring vacantly. "Say, doc, would you mind telling me why in — you kept so mum about it?"

"Well, I don't know."

Sloane hesitated before he explained:

"I didn't care to pose as a bruiser. I got the name at a round-up, doing fancy roping and gun-tricks. I spent my vacations on my uncle's Texas ranch and took to all those stunts from a kid. As to fighting, I was born with a punch—especially my left. It was just like breathing. Then this face of mine—and my temper—always got me in trouble."

"Yeh, I see," said the dep dryly. "You took mighty good care of it—that face; you haven't even got a thick ear. Didn't you box in college?"

"Lord, no! I didn't want to be sent up for homicide, and my bouts didn't last long enough to get me messed up," Sloane ex-

plained with careless simplicity. "But somehow I was always tangling with some trouble-maker."

He sighed. Old Kinney was chuckling in the lower register, and now came up for air:

"Whoosh! Ye're a cute little mamma's darlin', doc, but — if I see why you are so ashamed of yourself."

Sloane met the keen blue eyes with a smile.

"It's just that I thought it wouldn't help me any, especially here in the cultured East, to be known as the Texas Kid. And I'm *not* a prize-fighter—I only fought for money twice, when I was hard up."

He turned to Murphy soberly.

"But about this Blackbeard business. Is Brine sure that Train was robbed by that gang? I thought he had dropped Dave's case entirely."

"No. He doesn't do things that way."

Murphy had recovered enough to get to the subject in hand.

"You started something when you gave him the dope on your friend's disappearance. Before this, all the victims of this Blackbeard had been crooks or gamblers, and no definite proof at that. But now he seems to think he can land somebody on this case, and he's still on the trail—by proxy, you might say."

"How do you mean, by proxy?"

"He has had to get amateurs—outsiders—to do the work in the open, because all his men are known to the bunch he is trailing. He is working underground, see? He told me to tell you not to come to him about it, but to see your visiting, Dr. Wise the surgeon. He is a fine old sport too, Dr. Wise."

"I ought to have called on him before. I'll do it tonight." Sloane got up. "Is that all?"

"That's all—and a plenty!"

The dep was grinning so suggestively as he rose that Sloane lingered to look at him with suspicion.

"I don't want you to think I was posing," he said impulsively. "And that gun stunt wasn't as foolish as it looked. I had time for another shot if I needed it, and I was sure to get him in the hand or arm. It just looked the safest way out, and nobody got killed."

He looked at the dep defensively. Murphy laughed outright.

"Doc, you're a three-ring circus! Listen!"

He sobered suddenly as he went on:

"This is the second time you have pulled me out of a bad hole when I was going down for the last time. I don't forget those things; ask anybody. I know that hot air pays no bills, but you just give J. P. Murphy the chance to get square—the first chance. Will you do that?"

And again the hard-shell dep held out a hand for a hard grip. As they shook Sloane cried—

"I'll do that thing, J. P!"

And from then on they were two men together.

As the three passed out of the office the dep told Riley, who stood faithfully on guard:

"All over, Dennis! Did you hear the— By the way, doc! Do you want that thing kept dark any longer? If you'll take my advice you'll let 'er run. It certainly won't do you any harm in swell circles, and you'll be the big noise over here."

Sloane saw that Riley was looking at him in an eager adoration already—Riley had heard his confession of course—so he consented.

"Do just as you think best."

"Gee!" Riley's exclamation was almost a groan. "I'll never hear the last o' this from that fat lobster—that Professor! I'm glad he goes out tomorra. Here he comes now. May as well beat him to it."

For the Professor was pacing majestically up the aisle toward his drug-cabinet, looking more all-wise and double-chinned than ever. Riley hailed him:

"Hey, you! Come here! Let's have it over right now."

He shook a threatening finger under the Professor's dignified nose with a grin twitching at his savage frown.

"If you ever claim that you knew all along that Dr. Sloane here was the Texas Kid himself, I'll crack your fat nut with the butt of my gun!"

And, slipping his Colt from its holster, he waved it by the barrel before the fat man's face. The Professor knew Riley thoroughly.

"Hoo! Big Injun!" he grunted, then winked at Sloane gravely. "'Course I knew it!"

He turned to his work with accented dignity.

"Did Clark get quiet when he was put in isolated?" Murphy asked Riley before he left the ward. "Or didn't you hear?"

"Never made a peep." The Professor

was putting in his oar as usual. "They said he acted as if that was what he wanted. He thinks nobody can get at him there."

And the fat lips curled in evident scorn as the oracular drug-orderly sneered.

"What d'you mean by that?" the dep demanded roughly. "Of course nobody can get at him in there. You make me sick. It's hysterical nit-wits like you that spread this scare on the tiers and keep such fool stories as this Blackbeard thing going."

The Professor's smile took on its half-hurt, half-scared sickness.

"Just the same they always croak on time when they get their warning," he muttered in an undertone.

"Now that'll do you!"

Murphy turned back with a threatening frown and went on:

"I'll be glad to see your back tomorrow, but if you don't quit spreading that kind of stuff I'll see you do full time! And you'll spend the rest of it in dark cell."

"Yes, sir. I'll keep still, Mr. Murphy."

The fat man's fear was the fear of a child who dreads a whipping. Sloane was staring at him in astonished disgust. Old Kinney roused him from his thoughts:

"Well, doc, you have given the tiers somethin' to think about. The whole prison will be hummin' with it tonight. So long!"

Kinney's words reminded the dep of his manners, and he came back to say:

"You gave me such a jolt I forgot what I was going to say, doc. When you see your visiting, Dr. Wise, tell him all about it. He's a fight fan and he'll be tickled stiff. And there's no use trying to hush it up now it's out. So long!"

The dep was gone, and Sloane was still standing by the office door when a knock sounded on the door of the women's ward. He opened it to face Mrs. Donovan, Murphy's pretty fiancée.

"I'll own up, doctor; I was listening and heard most of it."

She flushed.

"Then you heard the dep's public apology. He is a white man."

"I am glad. I knew you'd like each other. You are both shy and sensitive really," she told him. "But I knocked to tell you Aunt Mary sent for you. She said:

"Tell 'im to come and let 'is 'arem mike a fuss over 'im. Miriam is a 'aving 'ysterics already."

"Aunt Mary is trying to quiet her now;

the girl has gone all to pieces," Mrs. Donovan finished with real sympathy.

The kindly old diamond expert was seated by the bed, stroking the gold hair of the girl, whose face was buried in the pillow, her white, round arms clasped about her head. Aunt Mary looked up at Sloane.

"Found 'er tongue all of a sudden, doctor; been carryin' on something fierce."

"What did it; the noise and excitement?" Sloane asked.

"What was it, my lass?"

Aunt Mary's voice was gentle.

"Nothing. Please go away!" came the muffled voice from the pillow.

"Can I do anything for you?" Sloane softened at once. "I'll do anything I can."

With a writhe as if in pain the girl sat up, turning to him a face still beautiful in spite of her tears and swollen lids.

"You can't do anything for me—it's too late; but you can do a lot for some one you care more about."

Her face quivered, and with the cry, "You tell him; I can't!" she buried her face again in the pillow.

Aunt Mary got up with a nod to Sloane to follow her. She limped up the ward to her rocking-chair and waved Sloane to sit on the bed.

"Well!" She got her breath presently. "I thought I was foxy, but you never can tell. I never thought I was 'urtin' the poor gerl when I ragged you two; but she's a woman, and you 'ave got a way with 'em, no mistake!"

"Shucks!"

"Not that she's desperately in love and dyin' for you. But she fell for your gun-play and your looks—fell 'ard," said Aunt Mary crisply. "So she went to pieces and told me w'at she was 'ere for."

"Then she was planted," Sloane said eagerly, "as you suspected. Whom is she watching, and why?"

"You," Aunt Mary said shortly. "She wouldn't tell who sent 'er, but she's quit on 'em now. Any'ow they're takin' 'er out tomorrow, poor gerl. But she told me to tell you to watch out; don't go in town alone, and get that 'ead nurse away from that bunch at the club-'ouse."

"I'd be glad enough to do that if I knew how," Sloane said. "But I can't see her—can't even get into her house. I expect to see her this evening, however."

"I cahn't tell you 'ow," Aunt Mary con-

fessed. "You must get 'elp outside—tell Jem Martin and Dr. Wise—but it's got to be done before the fight tomorrow night."

She leaned forward to impress it on him.

"So you want to get busy," she concluded.

"Did she give any hint what was threatening Miss Welland?"

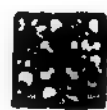
"Of course not. Likely she'd get croaked if she did," Aunt Mary snapped. "But she's doin' it for you and the other girl. And there's — few spotless gerls in 'igh life would do as much, my lad; take it from an old gun-moll!"

"Don't I know that?"

Sloane stood up. "I'm mighty grateful——"

"Cut out the speech and saw wood," Aunt Mary broke in. "'Ere is w'ere the Texas Kid rescues Beauty in Distress. So 'op to it, my lad!"

VI



AT DUSK Sloane was running up the iron stairs of "Charity," the City Hospital. He had not succeeded in seeing Dr. Wise or Jem Martin, and he had not seen the girl since he had kissed her in the house in town. Was he too late again?

Work was over, the operating-room cleared and deserted, and his steps on the tiled floor echoed emptily as he crossed to the sterilizing-room. Nobody there; but the door beyond was open and he hurried to it—breathed a sigh of relief and delight.

Barbara stood looking out of the broad west window, outlined against the sunset sky behind Manhattan's roofs. Her graceful silhouette had all her charm—all the power to make his heart jump and his breath come faster. She must hear his heart beat—must have heard his step; but she did not turn at once, and he feared to startle her.

Just as he was about to speak she turned and flashed on the incandescent light. Her clear, proud face had a remote beauty that silenced him as she spoke.

"So you are here again. I asked you to stay away. Did you think I didn't mean it?"

Cold and even insolent as her tone was, her voice had a quality that went through him. He pressed his lips tight, and she went on:

"Or did you think I had surrendered—that you had only to hold out your hand

to call me to heel? Was that what you thought when I let you kiss me?"

"No," Sloane said quietly. "It had the opposite effect. You seem farther off than ever. I have tried to see you every day because I wanted to see you. But this time I came to tell you that they are a bad lot where you live. I think you ought to stay somewhere else where you'd be safe."

She looked at him steadily as if she were weighing him and asked abruptly—

"Where did you learn to shoot?"

"On the plains—out West," he replied. "Have you heard about that affair over at the pen this afternoon?"

"Yes. Did you expect to find me wild with anxiety? Did you think I would fall into your arms and call you my Hero?"

There was a spark in her eyes.

"No, ma'am. I should like that," Sloane said soberly, "but I didn't think anything about that. I came to warn you, as I said."

She still kept her eyes on his face as she asked:

"Why didn't you strike back when Kelly hit you? Were you afraid?"

"What has that to do with the question?" he retorted.

She slowly answered:

"Well, for one thing, I can't believe a coward. Then I want——"

"But you told me you were satisfied I was not a coward!" he broke in, and she nodded with a little smile.

"I wondered if you'd pick that up. You are evidently not afraid of a blow—possibly because you are used to being whipped—but I should like to know whether you can fight if necessary. Did you ever try to knock a man down yourself?"

Her manner so plainly implied that she regarded him as purely ornamental that Sloane smiled.

"Would you like—would you *dislike* me any less if I could fight—fight well?"

"I should like you very much better if I were sure of it; very much better."

"Then I'll tell you. You will hear it anyhow, and please remember I am not bragging. I can fight. I have even fought in the prize-ring twice, and won."

"Really?"

Her face lighted as she questioned him:

"When, and where? I know all the fighters—have read about them and heard Jem Martin talk about them. Tell me, please!"

In the delight of watching her he had to make an effort to focus on her question. He roused himself.

"Tell you what? When? Oh, you say you know Martin and have read about boxing. You didn't happen to hear or see anything about the Texas Kid three or four years back?"

Although she did not move he could see the pupils of her dark eyes spread and blacken.

"The Texas Kid!" she whispered slowly. "You—fought Kendal— Is that what——"

"Ask Martin if you doubt it. I asked him not to talk," Sloane put in as she paused for so long and stared so incredulously. "I told you I was not bragging—I— What's the matter?"

She put her hand to her throat and turned away so quickly that he was startled. Walking to the window, she leaned one arm on the sash and stood looking out for some time before she spoke.

"Yes, I have heard of you, of course. I don't doubt you—now."

She turned to him to ask:

"Why did you do it? For the money?"

"Yes. I wanted to go to the Klondike with a friend. We went, and we were lucky, so I didn't have to enter the ring again."

"I see."

Her eyes fell before his. She did not look up when she asked:

"What about the people where I live? What have you heard about them?"

"That they—some of them—are mixed up in these Blackbeard crimes."

He expected surprise or indignation, but she only smiled as if at her own thoughts and said pensively:

"There's nobody in the house with me except Mrs. Brady and the maid. In the club-house it can't be Matt or Kelly, for Kelly often helps the police. Who told you? About the Blackbeard rumor, I mean."

"Some one who knows a lot about crooks—inside facts," Sloane answered, and told her briefly about Aunt Mary and the girl called Miriam.

She watched his face with absorbed intentness, and when he finished she asked—

"Did this Miriam say I had any part in robbing or killing anybody?"

"No."

"Aunt Mary did then?" she persisted.

"Not today. Before I ever saw you she said that you might have been used as a lure without knowing it," he confessed. She smiled.

"I suppose you believe all you hear and all you read in the papers. But you have some special interest in this case. Blackbeard only worked on crooks and gamblers, so I don't suppose any friend of yours has been robbed or—killed."

"But there has. The friend I mentioned, Dave Train, has disappeared with all his money."

He was about to add, "And mine," when she nodded cheerfully.

"Now I understand—all of it. I thank you for your interest in me. Were you intending to rescue me single-handed from the den of thieves? Or do you intend to stop with a warning?"

"I will do anything I can," he said quietly. "And I am going to find out more about Train."

"I admire your—nerve! Alone?"

"Any way at all. With your help if possible, but when I start I finish."

"Fine!" she sparkled. "Sounds like a motto from a coat-of-arms."

"It is," he stated gravely. "I'll quote another—

"Ist Niedering and
No treue Sloane
Who dieth not
With Bootes on.

"Do you like that?"

"Very much!" clapping her hands softly. "More!"

He bowed low.

"Then let me go home with you again," he proposed.

"I shall be honored by your escort, Sir Knight!"

She courtesied.

She went for her wrap and when she returned handed it to him to place round her shoulders, looking up at him with challenge in her eyes.

"Now wouldn't it be sad if your only reward were a sure-enough licking from Shad Kelly? Could he do it?" she asked.

"Probably he could—Queensberry Rules," he said gravely. "He has reach and weight, is a bigger man and a hard hitter."

"Hadn't you better get your trusty Colt?"

"You would really feel safer if I got it?"

"Not really," she laughed. "Better find

your way to the other door before I turn off the light."

As she followed him through the operating-room she added:

"I was just trying to scare you again. I am very glad you are—what you are."

When they stepped out into the lighted corridor he saw she carried a small black-leather bag. He took it as he said—

"You really mean that?"

Their hands touched, and she did not shrink, but said coolly—

"I mean that—and perhaps more."

Just then Miss Benn, the tall and friendly nurse he had seen before, came across the hall and gave them a knowing smile with her "Good night." Feeling that he had never really lived before, Sloane followed her light step down the iron stairs, through the hall and down the granite steps to the gravel walk. As he came abreast she spoke again lightly.

"We might be an old married couple."

"I wish we were—a young one," he replied. "I dare you!"

The silence that followed lasted so long that he asked at length:

"I beg your pardon. Did I hurt you?"

"Yes, you did."

Her low voice sounded choked.

"I am very sorry. I didn't mean to be impertinent—or fresh. Forgive me?"

She had stopped where the light from the float showed her face, white and rigid. She spoke abruptly.

"You have gone far enough tonight—too far—already. I suppose I should thank you for the honor you do me, but I warn you not to come with me tonight. And this time I mean it."

"That has a familiar sound," he answered as coldly. "And as before I tell you I can't turn back for such a warning. I think you are really in danger, although you don't take my warnings seriously."

"Then we are quits." She went on toward the float. "I shall not beg you—again."

After a few steps she added:

"I will tell you that it is more than a knockdown you are courting this time. I doubt if Kelly is in town, and I am not in danger; but I can't answer for what may happen to you if you persist in going to the house."

"That's all right then," he said comfortably. "I may come in handy yet."

From that moment she refused to talk.

The silence held until they were rolling down-town in the street-car. She sat looking ahead or down at her hands clasped in her lap, while he stole a sidelong glance now and then for the pleasure of looking. At length as he stole a look aslant he met her eyes. At first she flushed with anger, bit her lips, then broke into an unwilling smile of rich appreciation that dazzled him.

"We do look like it—a married couple," she admitted. "And I was to blame. I'm sorry."

"You're a gentleman!" he said warmly. "I mean you——"

"You can't improve it. Don't try."

In a laugh all tragedy evaporated for the moment. She became serious at once, however, and told him:

"Just the same, you don't know how dangerous this is, this thing you are starting. When we get there you might as well come in for five minutes. I must tell you something, and it would be still more dangerous for you to go back alone."

She was so careful not to speak aloud that he did not ask a question until they were off the car and walking across-town. Then she explained as she hurried on:

"This man the papers call Blackbeard is deadly to any one who follows or betrays him, and he will come to New York tonight or tomorrow. Kelly is dangerous and reckless, but even he is afraid to face Blackbeard."

"Well, he is not likely to trouble us this evening," was Sloane's comment.

"You can't tell. Nobody knows. He may be in town now. Anyway you must not be found in the house with me. I will show you a way out that will be safer than the front door."

She was rather breathless with hurry, and she walked faster with a free swing he admired. Suddenly he asked—

"Why is there no danger for you?"

"I can take care of myself," she replied carelessly. "I was trained to that early. And Kelly will not dare touch me, if he dares come in town tonight. Keep your head down as we cross the avenue."

 WHEN they reached the handsome old residence adjoining the club-house she let herself in with a latch-key, closed the door after him and took the bag he was carrying. She darted into the library, coming back without the bag, and led him into a small room on the left.

"There is a way out from here through the club-house basement. That grate is false. I just found out how to swing it."

She was turning on the lights, and he saw that the room had no window and no door but the one they had entered. The grate had a gas-log, but showed no sign of smoke or use. Sloane sniffed the air.

"A smoking-room?" he asked. "I thought I smelled smoke—cigarets."

"Matt, the colored man, perhaps."

She looked startled and went to the door to look down the hall. Closing it, she waved him to a seat on a corner couch, sat in a leather chair facing him and leaned forward to ask:

"What is your real reason for coming here? Be quick—and honest!"

"To see you, to help you and to find out about Dave, my partner."

"What did he look like—your friend Dave?"

Her inflection was a question.

"Dave Train," he finished for her. "A handsome, big chap—fair, with a scar on his cheek and a geisha tattooed on the back of his hand."

She seemed to control her face with an effort and glanced at the closed door, then at the false grate opposite. He opened his mouth, but she held up her hand.

"Listen!"

With one smooth movement she was at the door and had it open. She slipped through and held it open a crack that he might hear her speak.

"What do you want, Matt? You have no business here without my permission."

"I got awdehs, Miss Barb'," came the deep, rich voice. "You got 'at white boy in yondeh."

"You are to let him alone, Matt. Those are my orders!" she flashed back.

"Cain't he 'p 'at, Miss Barb'. Mist' Kelly say not let 'at white boy git outa hyeh until he see him. I don't dast let 'at white boy outa hyeh; no, ma'am!"

"Then you stay right here, Matt, until I talk to him a minute. You can do that. You'll be sorry tomorrow if you don't."

"I be sorrier tonight if I does let out 'at boy. Yas'm, I reckon I can do lak you says. Bet' not make 'at minute too long, Miss Barb'!"

"I won't, but you can watch the door."

Slipping inside, she closed the door and looked at Sloane with a face gone suddenly

pale. He came to help her, but she shook her head and crossed the room, beckoning him.

"Something is wrong. Matt never refused to obey me before. And I don't like his eye; it dodges. Did this friend of yours have much money with him?"

"All he owned and all mine too. Have you seen him?" Sloane asked eagerly.

"I—I'm afraid so!" Her eyes widened with fright. "Yours too? Why didn't you tell me that before? You must——"

She stopped, staring behind him.

"I'll fix your pretty chorus-man and fix him right this time. Leave him to me!"

The harsh, menacing voice turned Sloane in his tracks. The grate and mantel had swung out into the room, leaving an opening through which Kelly was stepping from a lower level. He looked at Barbara with lowering menace.

"Going to let him out this way, eh? Nothing in it for you. He is a cheap skate. But he's got to be put where he can't make trouble!"

The girl faced the bruiser coldly.

"You don't dare lay a hand on a friend of mine, Kelly. I shall tell your employer tomorrow unless you let Dr. Sloane go at once."

"Yeh?" Kelly sneered. "How long you been runnin' with second-string fighters? Know who this guy is? He's a cheap pork-and-beaner that——"

"You don't know a gentleman, Shad Kelly. How could you?" the girl said with biting scorn. "But you do know what will happen to you when I tell your boss what you have done."

"Tell and be ——; it'll be too late when he gets here, if he comes," Kelly growled, although he was visibly pale at the thought. "I take orders from no man any more; I give 'em! Come on, Matt; hold her if she tries to squeal. Gag her if you have to."

He took a step toward Sloane as he added savagely:

"This baby-doll has made trouble enough. I'll take him apart and break the pieces!"

Sloane sprang between Barbara and the big negro, who had entered, closed the door behind him and locked it, and was now creeping toward the girl like a huge gorilla. As Sloane pressed her backward with his outstretched arms she whispered in his ear, one hand on his shoulder:

"Don't let Matt get his hands on you!

Fight fast—and fight foul. Carry it to them—*now!*"

She released his shoulder with a little thrust that was almost a caress. With words and tone she thrilled him to redoubled power. He flashed one glance about him. It was two to one! And either one of his opponents bigger than he—both hard fighters. The big black, whose bulging chest and arms showed in a sleeveless jersey, was a sparring-partner.

Both men had weight and reach on him—were his superiors in all but nerve-force and brains, the inborn, fighting imagination; that subconscious creative power that grasps any peril whole and makes of it the weapon for victory; the rare gift that marks the never-beaten fighter of legend and story. This Sloane had. In one look he saw the room held not a thing he could use as a weapon. All this flashed upon him when she touched him and said—

"Carry it to them—*now!*"

The two fighters had drawn apart to get him between them. He sprang away, noting that they left the hole in the wall free—therefore keep away from it! With a light leap backward he was upon the couch, over it and in the corner behind it, his two men coming on.

Squatting quickly, he caught up and heaved the couch on to them with a forward fling toward Kelly. While it was still in air he dived at the negro head down. As he went he swung his right in a feint for the head, then heaved his weight behind his left fist into the pit of Matt's stomach—*buppl!*

A wicked drive; it seemed to slap Matt's stomach-wall against his backbone; and the big negro went down backward, doubled over his arms. He rolled to his side, feebly jerking while a thin trickle of blood ran from gray lips that opened and shut in gasps of agony. Matt was out for the moment.

But Kelly had flung off the couch and was coming. Sloane sidestepped, sprang upon one of the arm-chairs and with a sidelong kick sent it rolling against Kelly's shins, then caught Kelly stumbling off balance with a right swing on the jaw that sent the fighter reeling against the wall. But Sloane followed too fast, tangled in the chair-legs, and his swing went wild. Kelly was out and after him, roused and savage. Matt too was getting his breath and coming round.

Sloane broke ground; drew Kelly with him. Then with swift precision he feinted

with left, swung his right purposely high, once more threw his weight and spring behind his powerful left drive. His fist glanced off Kelly's chin, but even so it jarred the big Irishman so that he dropped to one knee. Sloane again tripped over the chair on his follow-up and went down on all fours.

He was afoot none too soon. Kelly sprang to meet him with a vicious right-and-left swing. His left caught Sloane under the ear; staggered him. Kelly overswung and clinched. Again the omnipresent chair tangled their legs, and they toppled sidewise together.

Sloane was free and first afoot with a backward snap-up, landed a left that got Kelly still unbalanced and sent back his head with a snap. But Sloane followed too eagerly; Kelly ducked and got an underhold clinch with a hug like a bears', grunting savagely:

"Now, Matt! Get him good!" Meanwhile rooting his head tight under Sloane's arm.

"Look out for Matt! Break away!"

Barbara's clear voice was like a trumpet note to Sloane. From his eye-corners he glimpsed the negro, like a huge orang-utan with deadly arms outstretched for him—for his throat.

With a frantic kick and squirm he got a thumb under Kelly's eye—the other clawing hand in his curly hair—and gouged and tore until the big fellow let go with a moan of pain and rage, lashing out right-and-left as he broke away. His right by chance caught Sloane under the chin and dropped him flat on his face, where both his opponents could pounce on him. Then and there they would have got him if the girl had not taken a timely hand.

When Kelly got free of the couch it was left standing on its side, and Barbara stood behind it, alertly watching every movement. Now Sloane lay just in front of it, prone on his face, both men ready to leap upon him.

Barbara gave the couch a quick thrust that dropped it on its legs just over Sloane. Another stronger push on its casters rolled it under Matt and Kelly as they pounced, tripping them on to it and carrying them neatly back on its padded surface far enough to uncover Sloane, who at once got up.

"Thanks!" Sloane said cheerfully, at the same instant slipping out of his torn and hampering coat and kicking the couch farther with a ready foot.

Then he tore in like a giant refreshed,

leaping to meet the two who were scrambling off the yielding surface of the couch. What followed would have been slap-stick farce if it had not been too vicious in purpose.

Both men were in a blind killing rage at this lesser man who had played with them so long—fiercely eager to finish. Kelly was first off their moving base; but before he was upright Sloane slugged him in the ribs, and he tripped back on the couch on his back. The next second Matt followed him. Once more Kelly did not get fairly on his feet before he was driven tripping back, feet in the air; then repeat!

It was fast work, and Sloane was a beautiful picture as he darted and struck with a speed and accuracy of time and distance that was a poem to the knowing eye. Barbara's face was alight with appreciation of all aspects of the performance, but it darkened as she saw it could not last.

Matt was the first to use his head. Slipping to the floor, he made a snake-like slide for Sloane's feet, reaching for an ankle with one big paw.

"Matt! Matt!" Barbara screamed in terror—no time or need for more.

But Kelly was just at the right distance for Sloane to use the French trick Louis Le Moulet had taught him on the Yukon—the *coup de talon* that will fell an ox, and Sloane let drive. He doubled at the hips, spun on his left foot; his right heel lashed backward through the air at Kelly's ear—*crack!*

It was Kelly's luck of the Irish that it glanced instead of landing fair, or he would not have met Sharbett the following night in the ring. As it was the big fellow toppled against the wall and slid to the floor with his head lopped sidewise.

But Sloane was down too. Matt had got both his ankles and brought him down heavily on his side. With an incoherent cry Barbara sprang forward; but at that critical moment Matt reached up to get Sloane's arm—a grave mistake. Sloane swung back the free foot and kicked—squarely and cruelly into Matt's already sore stomach—and he was free.

"A low-down trick!" was his shamed comment as he jumped to his feet and turned to the girl. "But you said, 'Fight foul.'"

"Come quick!"

She pulled him toward the hole in the wall. "He will shoot!"

Matt was still gasping, but Kelly had raised on one elbow and was weakly pulling a gun from his hip pocket while he tried to get his dazed eyes to focus.



SLOANE allowed himself to be drawn through the dark opening in the wall; felt the breathing warmth of the girl's body as she pressed past him to swing and fasten the false grate in place. They were on a pitch-dark stair, but safe.

"They can't open it from that side now," she said as she found his hand with a cool, firm clasp. "Keep your head low. Three steps more—there! Now wait!"

She had led him down the steps as she spoke, and now found a light switch in the dark. When the light flashed on it showed them in a narrow, boarded passage at the stair-foot. Barbara's face shone with a frank admiration that was boy-like as she met his eyes.

"That was gorgeous—especially that *savate*! I want to apologize; you must forgive me! Your hand is bleeding; let me see it!"

"A skinned knuckle. Don't—" Sloane muttered breathlessly.

But she had caught up his hand, looked from it to his face, and into her deep eyes had come a softer light that startled him. Her lips trembled as she let it go with a lingering touch.

"Barbara!" he whispered, drawing close. "You must come away from this! I will——"

"No—no—please!"

She shook her head, and two tears ran down her cheeks unhindered.

"You don't know—you'd never speak to me if you knew. I brought your friend here—to this trap; but I didn't know they meant to—to kill him."

She finished hoarsely, turned to the wall and put her face in her bent arm.

"They *didn't* kill him," Sloane declared.

In the silence that followed he heard the distant, rolling thunder and crash of a bowling-alley. It seemed as if something had smashed inside him.

"Tell me—Barbara!"

He too was hoarse and rigid. She shook her head without turning from the wall and answered:

"No—but they might. They left him down-town, stunned—blackjacked. He has lain unconscious for days."

Her speech was muffled but controlled.

"Where—where? Is he still unconscious?"

"No. He was operated—yesterday!" She writhed at the thought. "He remembers now, but you can't see him until tomorrow."

She turned about to face him hopelessly as she went on:

"He is well cared for in Chinatown. Ask for Wing Wo Chong. But don't go until tomorrow. Better wait until next day after the fight."

She suddenly turned her head to listen.

"You must go now. Come—this way!"

She hurried along the passage to its end. A rough board door closed it. She slipped the bolt and took a look outside. Over her shoulder Sloane could see a dusty furnace-room and stairs leading upward, but he was intent upon her danger.

"Listen, girl!" he urged. "I'll take you out of this—right now. I know a place—the dep's mother is just the——"

"Listen! You—Texas Kid!" she flashed back with a tremulous smile. "I *want* to stay here until tomorrow—I shall call help if you try to take me—and I promise you I shall be all right—really!" urging him to the door.

"When shall I see you? At the hospital tomorrow?" he insisted.

"If you go—quickly—and keep where people are, so you can call the police."

She caught up his bruised hand, pressed it to her lips and thrust him through the door so suddenly that he found himself alone in the dim warmth of the furnace-room. The door of rough boards was between them; a bolt clicked; he heard a low, clear voice that now almost laughed with happiness:

"Tomorrow—at Wing Wo Chong's. You—Texas Kid!"

"I shall be there. Good night!"

"Good night! Get a coat and hat on Third Avenue."

And he heard steps receding. Roused to sudden misgiving, he beat on the door.

"Wait! Will you meet Kelly—and Matt?"

"No," was the clear answer. "I am as safe as a church—honestly! I swear it."

He could almost see her clear, truthful eyes, and with a final, "Good night" he went up the stairs.

The rear hall of the club-house was empty. He was tempted to go out by the back door unseen; but he recalled Barbara's charge, and, opening a door, he marched

along the broad front hall, looking neither to right nor left as he saw young men staring at his bare head and shirt sleeves.

He slipped through the front door, ran down the steps and bumped into a tall man who caught his arm.

"Hello, doc!" said the stranger, a lean, tanned man in a broad Stetson, carrying an up-to-date topcoat. "I haven't seen you at the Post Clinic lately; thought I'd lost you before I found you. Been mixin' it, or gettin' over a souse? Or both?"

The man had West written all over his keen face and piercing eyes; but Sloane had been three months in New York. He said coolly:

"I have left the Post Clinic. I don't remember you there."

"Came the day you left then," said the other cordially. "Spotted you at sight for a man from the place where they raise 'em—climb into this; no use for the — thing—and I kept an eye skinned for you ever since."

He had got Sloane into the light overcoat, and now introduced himself:

"My name is Parsons—Jedediah Parsons, M. D., from anywhere west of Omaha—and yours is Sloane, I take it. Shake!"

"You take it right."

Sloane returned a strong grip.

"How did you know?"

"Asked the count with the pink whiskers in the information pulpit at the hospital," Parsons told him as they walked. "Just occurred to me maybe you might be the same Sloane that Dave wrote about. You don't look it."

"Dave? Dave Train, d'you mean? Why, sure! You'r 'Uncle Jed!' Shake again!"

Sloane's face flushed alight as he stopped to grip hands once more with the uncle of his partner.

"I just got news of Dave not ten minutes ago. He's alive, and I can see him tomorrow."

Parsons came to a stop:

"Wait a minute until I get over being dizzy. Things are moving rather rapid even for New York, and I'm fluttering out behind. Let me get my feet on the ground again. You say you found Dave? I'm on his trail, too."

"I have not seen him, but I just learned that he was knocked out, robbed and left somewhere down-town," Sloane explained. "We can't find out until tomorrow how

much he remembers about it. He's been operated on and mustn't be disturbed."

"Then we'll just have to wait," Parsons admitted. "Meanwhile how about a show? I have got clothes at my rooms that will fit you, and I've been so mighty lonesome it sure would be a Christian act if you'd come along and spend the night?"

He ended wistfully.

"I shall have to go back to the island before midnight," Sloane decided. "But until then——"

Parsons caught him by the arms and did some fancy steps, chanting:

"A hot time—in the old town— Whoa! Pardon me, neighbor!"

"Climb down, you —— giraffe!" growled the man whose feet Parsons had walked on.

As this person faced the light Sloane recognized Kelly, scowling maliciously. Parsons had red hair and a prominent chin, just now in evidence.

"Now—now! Don't get rough, neighbor! I asked your pardon once; but don't swallow anything that's choking you—spit it out! Hello! Friend of yours, kid?"

Parsons withdrew the hand that had strayed toward his hip pocket as he saw Kelly smiling at Sloane.

Kelly could control his face, and he managed to look human as he answered:

"Sure we are friends. Dr. Sloane left his hat at my house, and I came to give it to him. Just a word with you, doctor?"

He stepped aside invitingly.

"Not out of gun-shot, please!" was Parsons' low suggestion with a slight downward gesture of his right hand.

Sloane saw Kelly slant a look from Parsons to a closed carriage at the opposite curb. The carriage door had been open a crack; but it was now closed silently by a black hand from inside. Kelly handed him his hat as he muttered:

"If you want to be alive the day after tomorrow, you stay right on the island until tomorrow night. Get me? Keep away from her; see?"

"I understand, Mr. Kelly, and I shall do as I see fit," was Sloane's answer.

"Think so, huh?" Kelly sneered. "Wait until midnight, and then read this."

As Kelly put his hand in his vest pocket Parsons called out to him:

"Careful, neighbor! You're covered!"

"Nothing so raw as that," Kelly grinned,

and produced a folded slip of paper which he offered to Sloane with the words—

"This'll give you something to think about if you got anything to think with."

He turned to cross the street and entered the waiting carriage, which went back the way it had come.

"That lad is a crook," Parsons announced. "And he looks like a hard man to handle. Was the name Kelly?"

Sloane assented—

"Shad Kelly, the fighter who meets Sharbett tomorrow night."

"Now I'll go anyhow! And I hope I see him well licked," Parsons announced. "What was the billydoo he slipped you?"

Sloane opened the folded paper. On it was written in pencil:

Keep away, or follow Clark.—B.

He handed it to Parsons, who read it and whistled.

"Whee! More of this Blackbeard bunk! That Shad Kelly must be a fool to go hunting bother that way; but I'm not surprized. I was nosing around that club-house on the off chance."

Sloane came to a stand in surprize.

"Do you mean you are on the case too?"

"After a fashion. We'll talk it out as we go," Parsons said calmly. "Come on and get dolled up; then we eat and do things to New York."

VII



IT LACKED a quarter-hour of midnight in the men's ward of the pen hospital. Lawson had long ago finished darning his already pathetically darned old silk underwear, had fallen asleep over his worn copy of "Robinson Crusoe" and now roused himself to sit up in his old armchair in the doctor's office. He rubbed his eyes, looked at the scampering nickel clock in the window-seat and rolled himself a neat and slender Durham cigaret.

As he smoked it with dainty relish, listening to the occasional hoot of a tug on the river, his round face wore a worried frown. He got up to look out at the door—down the dim aisle of beds, at the night orderly asleep in the near corner opposite, and tilted his head like a bird to listen. Lawson was worried.

At last a clicking step—the clicking of heels on the spiral iron stairway—coming up and nearer. But it was not the doctor's

step; it was Devery. Cheery, moon-faced Nice-Day Devery, night head keeper of the prison. However, it was a poor imitation of his usual cheerful greeting that Devery gave his old crony as he stepped into the ward.

"Hi there! Nice night, me lud—I don't think!" He stopped in the door of the office to take off his cap and scratch his ear. "Say, I never saw the tiers so spooky as they are this night! No tappin'—nobody telegraphin'—not a fake toothache to ring up the night orderly even. Noticed it up here?"

"N-no—not that exactly."

Lawson frowned. "Do you suppose it's this—er——"

"This blink-blanked Blackbeard business!" Devery finished for him explosively.

"Sure it is some way, some stage of it; a new phase—ain't that the word? They ain't scared of Doc Sloane any more; he's the big noise, hero of the tiers all of a sudden; but I can't get rid of a notion they're all listenin' to hear what becomes of that poor cuss in isolated, Clark. He's got on my nerves too; think of the poor — in there waitin' for somethin' to come and get him before midnight! Time is it?"

He looked for himself.

"Ten to twelve," Lawson answered superfluously. "And Dr. Sloane hasn't been back to the island since two o'clock."

"The — you say!"

Devery sat down quick and hard.

"Hope nothing has happened to doc. You bear witness I liked his looks right at the start. The minute he showed over here and I saw him flash that sweet, sort o' cut-your-heart-out grin of his I knew there wasn't a yellow streak in that lad. I said so; didn't I, now?"

"Sounds like an obituary!" Lawson wrinkled his eyes. "I believe you did, but I don't like to hear that kind of talk—tonight. I'm jumpy too."

And he lighted his kerosene stove-lamp to make midnight coffee.

"Don't count me in on that tonight," Devery said. "Makes me worse when I'm nervous. It ain't doc I'm ticklish about; the Texas Kid can take care of himself any old place. It's on account of Clark in isolated, as I said."

Lawson knew that in all the prison there was no kinder heart than Devery's, but he looked at him in puzzlement.

"What's the sense in that?" he asked. "He wanted to be put in there where nothing could get at him until the time set for his death was past, and it will be past in five minutes."

Lawson looked at the clock.

"Clark's troubles are over," he announced.

Devery clapped his cap on and stood up.

"But he don't know it!" he snapped.

"He's been in there eight hours, waiting for this Lightning Death to come and kill him, and he don't know what time it is!"

Devery turned toward the stair-door, saying—

"If doc don't come in half an hour to make midnight inspection — 'f I don't go in there myself and tell the poor bug time's up and he's still alive."

"If he is still alive!" came a distinct but foreboding utterance, and the Professor appeared in the office doorway fully clothed.

It was his last night in prison, and he had been lying awake outside his bed. This he explained, adding the doleful reminder:

"Every crook who has got one of those warnings so far has met his death on time. Don't forget that! Here comes the doctor now."

"Nobody's going to forget it with you croaking around!" Devery rebuked the fat man. "Suppose you give us a rest on it for a spell. Well, doc! Nice night. Oh-h, yes! Glad you came. Let's go tell Clark he's alive, and it's tomorrow. Well?"

"Certainly," Sloane agreed. "I came back especially to make my midnight inspection."

"Good boy! I knew you wouldn't forget the poor —."

Devery led the way to the stairs.

"Come on!" he said.

As they clattered down the long, winding, iron stairway Devery called Sloane's attention to the exaggerated hush on the tiers. The few keepers on guard in the long corridors were watching the two on the stairs with furtive intentness. Sloane began to feel the unusual tension.

Devery crossed the lobby to the deep door of the isolated corridor, picked up the lantern that was waiting ready-lighted, and with his big key unlocked the door. Sloane was close behind him, and as he closed the heavy portal the isolated corridor echoed with vault-like emptiness.

This short corridor of cells was built as

heavily as a medieval dungeon, and not even an electric wire penetrated its heavy walls. Shut inside it, New York was miles away and ages ago.

Devery clanked his keys and shivered at the sound. The air was dank and oppressive, dead and unstirred by breath or sound-wave from the world outside. Devery made an effort at every-day cheer as he approached the cell where Clark had been confined. He called to him:

"Well, old hoss, all over! Time's up, and here you are—all a bad dream."

He flung back the grated iron door with a clang as he called again—

"Come on out and let doc——"

Stopped as by a blow, Devery stepped quickly inside the cell. A short silence; then his voice came out, low and trembling:

"Doc—look! Jus' look a' this!"

Already at the door, Sloane had to press the benumbed keeper aside to see clearly what was on the floor at the back of the bare cell. The striped body lay half-lying and half-sitting on the floor against the wall, head lopped on one hunched shoulder. The unshaven face was wax-white, and in the loose, half-open mouth hung a mouthful of bread just bitten from the hunk on the floor beside him. That had just fallen from the supine hand, with only one bite taken from it.

Sloane took the lantern from Devery's cold hand and bent over the body, for a look showed him it had been a corpse for hours.

"'K out, doc!" Devery whispered. "It's on that bread—whatever it is—killed him like lightning!"

Then with a sickly, hysterical giggle:

"An' f'r Pete's sake! Look who's here!"

One of Devery's shaking hands jerked Sloane's sleeve, while the other weakly pointed to something on the floor beside the hunk of bread. It was a small mouse, quite dead, and in its mouth too was a bit of the bread held by tiny teeth. The dead hand near by lay palm up and loosely open in a relaxed expository gesture, as if Clark were mutely calling the world to witness, in this smaller tragedy, the lethal power of the poison.

"What *could* it be, doc?"

Devery pulled Sloane gently outside.

"Don't stay in there! It's spooky—ghastly—not reasonable! How did it get

on that bread? And, doc—can any poison kill before you can swallow it?"

"Did you smell anything beside the lime-bucket?" Sloane asked soberly.

"Bitter almond or peach-stones — I thought." Devery murmured.

Sloane nodded.

"Prussic acid. One sniff kills like a thunder-bolt. This is something like it probably. HCN would kill the man who handled it. But that's not the thing to settle first. How about reporting this? Now or in the morning after the men have gone to work?"

"My good lord! That's so—the prison will be howling Bedlam—" Devery was still more demoralized—"and the dep will lose his job when this gets out."

He turned to Sloane with round eyes fairly sticking out. "And you, doc! You will be pinched and tried for murder—sure! Clark was hollering all over that you'd poison him!"

Devery expected to see Sloane collapse and took his arm protectively. But Sloane looked down at him with a one-sided smile.

"You're a white man, Devery—thanks! But just look natural and leave this to the Texas Kid for a while. You never can tell."

"My hat's off to the Texas Kid!"

Devery spoke soberly and doffed his cap at the words with genuine admiration. Looking at Sloane's face, blank and listening, he finally made a noise in his throat to rouse him:

"Eh-hm! Well, doc?"

Sloane started.

"I beg pardon; I was thinking. The dep mustn't lose by this. Say nothing to anybody until I phone Dr. Wise. I hear he has pull?"

"A drag like a river-tug!" Devery assented. "But, doc—here! We got to call a trusty to change the lime-bucket and water-can in here. If we do, he pipes the stiff; if we don't he's wise and hollering.* What?"

Sloane thought a minute.

"Where is the trusty? Call him in."

 DEVERY went to the heavy door and came back with an intelligent young convict whose face Sloane remembered.

"I've seen you before," Sloane started.

"Yes, doctor. You saw me get a bath with a fire-hose," grinned the boy.

"Bear any grudge?"

* He will know and tell about it.

"Not on your life! Not against the Texas Kid!" with a sort of salute.

"Well, Clark is dead, and we don't want to get the tiers stirred up about it. We want to keep it quiet until after eight anyhow. Can you fix that?"

"No, sir. Sorry, but it's all over the prison—even to fourth tier, new—already."

Sloane looked blank.

"No! How the deuce?" he asked.

"Easy! The first tier leader—man at this end—gave you just time to get to the cell and call me. When you didn't call he knew and started rapping on the frame of his cot. Every man awake knows it by now."

The young fellow told this, looking from one to the other. Then he turned to the doctor.

"What do you want done, doctor? They'll do it for you now, whatever it is."

Devery let out his breath with a blowing sound.

"Will they keep it quiet if I ask it?" Sloane asked dubiously.

"Will they? I pity the gink that squeals!" the boy assured him.

"Then all this panic was just bull?" Devery asked.

"Mostly. They have to have something for amusement," grinned the trusty. "But now they've got the Tex—the doctor to talk about, and his gun-play—"

He turned to Sloane suddenly.

"It's just plain fact, doctor, you could commit murder and they'd stick—every last crook of the bunch; that's straight!"

"Just because I can punch!" Sloane said wonderingly.

"Not quite, doc! Pardon me; doctor!"

The boy flushed as he explained:

"They don't admire this Shad Kelly—want to see him licked; but when a man can punch and is square, that gets next to 'em. They'd croak for you, doc."

He added the last carelessly as a matter of course. Devery gladly bore witness:

"The lad is telling it straight, doctor, They're like that; not a sweet bunch, but they go the limit."

"Then will you— How can I pass the word round?" Sloane asked the boy.

"Let me, doctor!" he begged eagerly. "Proud to do it. Can I? Why, doc, I am Number One. Ask Mr. Devery."

Devery again bore witness: ..

"He is the king pin. Leave it to him, doc."

"Thank you, doctor!"

The boy was off without another word in his eagerness to get the message started.

"That'll make things easier for the dep and all of us," Devery said thankfully. "You don't look swelled-up about it, doc. I'd be bent backward in your shoes."

"I have got to phone Dr. Wise and tell the dep."

Sloane was very sober.

On his way to Murphy's rooms he stopped to read again the slip of paper Kelly had handed him.

Keep away, or follow Clark.—B.

For another minute he stood looking at nothing with great seriousness; then put the note in his pocket and knocked on the dep's door.

Murphy opened at once, dressed and haggard of face, and he asked—

"Has Clark croaked?" adding instantly: "I knew it. Come in."

As he closed the door Murphy talked on heavily:

"I have been sitting up thinking it over, and I guess this does settle it! I may as well give up any notion of being warden and call myself lucky if I don't get the air."

He threw himself into an easy chair. As he looked up into Sloane's face his hard features softened.

"But how about you, doc? You know what I mean?"

"Yes. I'll get mine, I expect."

Sloane sat down wearily and asked:

"Can I use the phone in here? I want to call Dr. Wise."

"Sure!"

Murphy brightened.

"On the stand behind you. He can save you if he feels like it. He is a power at the Hall—handle him like glass."

"If I can get him at this hour."

Sloane swung his chair round and put in his call without much hope. He got an answer almost instantly. Murphy heard, gripping his chair-arms:

"Dr. Wise? Dr. Sloane speaking, resident at the pen. A prisoner went crazy today. He had got a warning, signed 'B.'—Sir? — Yes; he was to 'get his' before midnight tonight. He got it. His bread was poisoned. Slight HCN odor. What shall we do about it? Must an autopsy be performed at once?"

There followed faint voice-noises. Sloane listened, his face relaxing and becoming more alert and waved the dep to come ~~DEPART~~.

Murphy heard only the last sentences in Dr. Wise's smooth, cultivated voice:

"My motor car will be at Fifty-first Street in half an hour, if you can come at once. Shall I expect you?"

Sloane flashed the dep a joyful look.

"Yes, sir—glad to. But I shall get you out of bed."

"Bed! My dear boy, I am talking in my operating-gown now—just finished. In half an hour then!"

"He's an old prince!" Murphy declared as Sloane hung up. "But what did he say?"

"Not much over the phone," was Sloane's answer. "But he said leave the body undisturbed—he would see to all the red tape—and to tell you it was all right. What does that mean?"

Murphy collapsed in his chair with relief.

"It just about means what he said—that we are saved, both of us. He can fix it if he takes a notion, so mind you act your prettiest."

"I will do that." Sloane got up, again full of purpose. "I want to run up to hospital."

Murphy nodded.

"Plenty of time while Tom is rowing over."

While Tom, the night ferryman, was rowing across in a skiff in answer to the bell Sloane ran up the long spiral for a word with Aunt Mary. He had decided to show her the warning in his pocket and tell her what had happened in Barbara's house that evening.

He found her awake and sitting up in her bed. Her night-cap was pushed back, and her loose, fine, brown hair with not a white thread in it made her look forty instead of sixty-odd as she yawned sleepily.

"Goin' over to see Dr. Wise? I 'eard the bell for Tom."

She gave him a keen look, noticing the lump on his jaw, and showed her even teeth in a smile—

"'Ad another go with Kelly—or the coon?"

"Both."

Sloane grinned. Aunt Mary joined in:

"Get on with it! 'Ow did you come out?"

Sloane gave her a running hop-step-and-jump summary of the doings of the evening, including his warning signed "B," and handed her the slip of paper. He was

fairly shaking as he waited for her to put on her spectacles; but she got them on with precision, took them off to wipe them, put them on more carefully and unfolded the slip, first looking at the back.

"Ah—piper out of the dep's office. That would be Kirby," she remarked. "Now let's see the fist!"

She turned the note over.

"Bring that light a bit closer, doctor—there."

And her keen blue eyes held still for a moment, during which Sloane did not breathe. Slipping off her spectacles with one hand, she handed him the note with a contemptuous flirt.

"That's a fake! This 'ere Blackbeard never wrote it, you can lay to that. All the same, you'd best keep your lamps oiled. Do no 'arm to tike your pop in your kick w'en you go to Dr. Wise's. This Kelly 'as gone bad, and goin' worse. 'E's the man you want to watch out for—'im and 'is strikers. But was there anythink else?"

"Yes. What if Dr. Wise wants me to help catch those thieves that Barbara Welland seems to be mixed up with? This Parsons says Dr. Wise is a sort of proxy for Brine in this case, and he is over a number of amateurs. He may want me to trap her in some way."

Sloane looked particularly grim, and Aunt Mary gave him a frank grin of understanding.

"You stick to the gerl. You'd do it anyway."

She was enjoying his flush as she asked—

"Got any sense, 'as she?"

Sleepily she watched his vivid face as he let himself go, telling her of the wonder and the miracle that was Barbara. He was good to look at; but it was all old stuff to her, and she had to cover a yawn as she said:

"There goes the bell. Tom is waitin'. Good luck, lad!"

Tom the ferryman was full of the coming fight, and Sloane learned that Kelly was the favorite in the betting as well as in the sympathies of many fight fans because the ex-champion Sharbett was a paper fighter as well as a miser with his cash. He needed a licking "to shrink his head to his hat-band."

Tom asked at the float—

"Going to be there?" meaning at the fight.

"I hope so."

And Sloane stepped out, paying the man extra.

"See you tonight then. Thank you, sir!"

Sloane found the car waiting. It was the period when a ride in a "gas-buggy" was still an adventure, and the driver kept an ear pricked for danger-signals from his engine. Dr. Wise's chauffeur also was another fight fan.

"I got no use for this Kelly myself," he was rumbling as he shifted. "He's a crook, I believe, and I heard tell he was mixed up in this Blackbeard gang. Anything in that, think?"

"A lot of talk anyway," Sloane answered. Then to divert attention—

"Are you going to the fight?"

The man was off:

"Like to see anybody stop me! I'd throw up my job rather than miss it; but the boss is a shark for fights, and I drive him over. All the swells will be there—Police Com-mish and all—and the swell dames in black veils. Sure! That's right!" etc., etc.



THE great surgeon lived in a mansion fronting the park. He came to the door, freshly dressed and groomed. A real old-school gentleman from Kentucky, was Dr. Wise—tall and graceful, with fine features and long, drooping white mustache. He drew Sloane in with a warm hand-clasp, giving him a welcome that was more than form.

"A cheerless hour for a visit, Dr. Sloane; but any time is good that brings your father's son to my home."

Sloane found himself in a stately, book-walled room before a cheerful fire.

"Sit you there and drink this to warm you. When we have cleared the way for a carefree appetite we shall have a midnight lunch."

While Sloane sipped a glass of spiced wine that might have come straight out of a story by Thackeray the great man—for he was that—added to his surprize by his genial talk:

"Yes, you are a true-bred Sloane. One of the fine-featured fighting Sloanes that recurs every second generation, the 'spit'n' image' of your grandfather, the famous beau and duelist. His brother officers called him 'Beauty Sloane,' and I can see him now reincarnated in you."

"And you knew my father?" Sloane asked.

"I was at Oxford with him," Dr. Wise answered. "It was there I met your grandfather, home from India on leave and down

to see his son. Just once, but he made a great impression on me. Your father came to this country with me, and your mother was a distant relative of mine. So you see it is all in the family. By the way, I suppose you have not seen your uncle lately?"

"Not since my mother died, five years ago."

Sloane's expression hardened.

"We will speak of that another time," the surgeon said smoothly. "Now if you are ready we come to this matter of the poisoned prisoner, Clark. You don't smoke? I will, if you don't object, while you tell me about the Blackbeard mystery."

The surgeon lighted up and leaned back to listen. Sloane was somewhat puzzled by the open reference to the Blackbeard mystery. Dr. Wise noted his hesitation and added between puffs:

"You need not fear being overheard. There is nobody else in the house but my Chinese steward and friend, Ah Sun. I trust him absolutely, and he knows more than I do about the matter in hand. We have an hour before us if we need it, so take your time and omit nothing."

"I can tell all I know about it in two minutes," said Sloane. "I suppose you want the full story of Clark's case first. I never——"

"One moment—pardon me!" Dr. Wise interrupted. "I think I am in possession of all the essentials of his case. What I particularly wanted to know was your opinion of this interesting man to whom the papers have given that old familiar name, Blackbeard."

And he regarded the younger man with a look at once keen and kindly.

"I'm afraid I am so taken up with my own troubles and Mr. Murphy's that I didn't understand," Sloane confessed. "It looked as if I might be arrested for killing Clark, and the dep was sure he had no chance for promotion to——"

"Pardon me again!" Dr. Wise broke in apologetically. "I don't interrupt as a rule, but I must set your mind at rest. You can't possibly be the man we are after, and I happen to know that Mr. Murphy is sure to be appointed warden. I have consented to help my friend Brine in this case because all his men are too well known and too closely shadowed. I inferred that you knew that."

With this reassurance Sloane's face cleared. He was not a suspect, and the dep

would be delighted. He was ashamed of himself for looking upon the great surgeon as a kindly old gentleman, talking tedious prose—this man who was not only world-famous in his profession, but a man with immense influence in New York, whom the chief of detectives had called on for help.

"I beg your pardon, doctor! Parsons did tell me something of the sort, but things have certainly happened to me today—things that mixed and tired me."

He swept a hand across his forehead and flashed his reckless smile at the surgeon.

"I think I am ready now to make a stab at anything you're willing to set me at, sir."

"Bless me! How you *do* look like Beauty Sloane now!" exclaimed the surgeon in retrospect. "You belong in the age of broad ruffs and narrow swords, my boy! Well, you might begin by a brief story of your four days in the penitentiary hospital; then we can start fair."

Sloane dashed at it head down, making it so brief that the surgeon had to interrupt by questions. In that manner he got a fairly full account of the meetings with Barbara Welland, who seemed to interest him supremely.

"A marvelous surgical nurse!" said this highest authority. "Moreover, a most fascinating and beautiful girl, as she has every right to be by birth and training. It was fortunate that her uncle died just when he did, even if she is forced to support herself by nursing."

Sloane agreed vigorously.

"It's impossible that she can have anything to do with this crook, Blackbeard, or whatever his name may be," he protested.

The older man smiled.

"Blackbeard's real name, we now know, is Hasbrouck," said Dr. Wise slowly, "a good old name, and his earlier operations prove him a man of culture and ability. Moreover, his identity has been a mystery, so you see any one of us—or Miss Welland—might meet him unwittingly."

"But——"

Sloane stopped himself just in time. He was about to say that she did know the man. To cover his confusion he continued:

"But I don't see why you—how you could take the time and trouble to do this for Chief Brine."

"He is a friend I value highly, and—he insists that it takes a thief to catch a thief; you see?"

Sloane responded instantly to the surgeon's smile.

"So it takes a gentleman to understand a gentleman. I see."

But he added—

"That doesn't obligate you."

Dr. Wise shook his head.

"Not legally; but morally I am in the position of the citizen whom a constable may summon to assist him in an emergency. More than that, I am interested in Barbara Welland. I was in love with her mother," he finished softly.

"This is great—splendid!" Sloane's enthusiasm blazed up. "What do we *do*?"

"I see you don't believe in prosy deliberation," Dr. Wise smiled. "That is the privilege of youth. But I can't whip a prize-fighter or shoot the gun from a man's hand; not *now*."

"But you can tell me what to do. And a lot of things I want to know," Sloane replied hurriedly. "You don't think I am fresh, do you, sir?"

"Far from it; refreshingly modest, rather. But what in particular do you want to know just now?"

"Where is this Hasbrouck?"

"Somewhere outside New York. He will be in the city some time today."

"Why hasn't he been spotted before?"

"That would be a long story. But he usually had subordinates whom he directed in writing—he is a marvelous forger—and if they attempted to betray him they invariably died by the Lightning Death. So he was implicitly obeyed. The real Hasbrouck would be a hard man to outwit, and he did not prey upon good citizens—never until now," Dr. Wise added after a pause. "And I doubt if he has even now."

Sloane looked puzzled.

"I don't understand. Do you mean that some other man in working his game—making use of his reputation?" he asked.

"That is a good guess, if it is a guess." Dr. Wise smiled with approval. "Perhaps you have some reason for making it."

"I have," Sloane announced. "This Shad Kelly, the fighter, tried it on me. We had a little brush in the house where Miss Welland lives, and after I got out he followed me to give me this."

He handed the surgeon the penciled warning that had been designed to give him such a scare, adding as he did so—

"I showed it to a wise old lady in the

prison, and she said it was not genuine—that the real Blackbeard did not write it."

The surgeon read it and got up to pace the floor. He sat down and leaned toward Sloane impressively.

"This bears out a suspicion of mine. I have suspected Kelly, but he has political influence and powerful friends; he is even a sort of secret agent for the police. Say nothing about this at present, but don't run foolish risks."

"Certainly not!" Sloane smiled his twisted smile as he took the paper and threw it in the fire. "Kelly must have been in the employ of this Blackbeard, or Hasbrouck; but Miss Welland——"

Again he paused, and the surgeon spoke:

"I happen to know that she knows Hasbrouck—has met and talked to him three or four times. When her uncle's mind failed, Kelly had most of his property and hoped to entrap the girl. It was Hasbrouck who saved her and got her into the Nurses' School. She is grateful to him naturally."

"How—how did you find out?" Sloane stammered.

"The young lady herself told me," was the answer. "She helped me operate on your friend David Train. Now here is the situation in brief: She must be saved, even against her will, from this dangerous crowd. To do that we must land the head himself—Hasbrouck, or Blackbeard—and to get him we must shadow her. She has an appointment to meet him somewhere in town at noon today."

Dr. Wise paused to let the meaning of this sink in. Sloane had not caught up with him, and stared at him intently.

"You mean you want *me* to watch her, and to help seize this Hasbrouck when he comes to see her?" he asked. "Why did you pick me?"

"Because you are—well, attracted by her," the surgeon insinuated, "and it would look natural for you to follow her. We don't want to scare off our man, and he is very wise."

Seeing Sloane's face hardening stubbornly, he went on:

"Remember, it means the recovery of your friend's money and yours, as well as the safety of Miss Welland. You don't want to see her carried off by a man like Kelly, or this Killer Kirby over at the pen."

"Carried off!"

Sloane all but jumped to his feet.

"Yes. There will be a general get-away some time tomorrow—today, I should say—probably after the fight tonight, unless we land our man. You see?"

Sloane could see. He wanted to recover the stolen property for Dave and himself; he wanted to save the girl from a lot of crooks. But to follow her—make her betray the man who had once saved her? He set his jaw grimly.

"I'll do anything to help her—nothing to hurt her," he declared.

"And if the only way to help her is to do it against her will?"

"Then I want to be mighty sure it's the only way," Sloane apologized at once. "Pardon me, sir! I don't mean I doubt your word, but why not arrest Kelly now and make him confess?"

"He will keep well away."

Dr. Wise shook his head and explained:

"He has secret training-quarters over in Jersey, carefully guarded against any interference. I doubt if you could get any officer to arrest him until after the fight. All that has been cleverly arranged either by Kelly or the promoter Richards. No! We must get the 'main guy' himself when he meets Barbara at noon today. Will you do what you can to help?"

"Give me a minute to think."

Sloane tried to imagine Dave lying with bandaged head in some squalid hole in Chinatown. He couldn't make anything seem real but Barbara; he could even feel her lips on his; and it was with a little smile of amusement at his own obstinacy that he answered:

"I will do all I can to protect her, but I will not promise to do anything else. It may be foolish, but I can't help it."

"I didn't expect you would."

The great man smiled kindly, even affectionately.

"You know the old French saying, '*bon chien chasse de race*'—'a good dog hunts because his race leads him to hunt'—and I know your race. Nevertheless I am confident that when the time comes you will do the right and gentlemanly thing. You know I would ask you to do nothing else. Now we will have a light lunch before you go back to get some sleep."

The surgeon led the way to the dining-room where a supper was ready-laid for them with coffee steaming over a blue flame.



DR. WISE never referred to the task before them, but entertained his guest with tales of Sloane's immediate forebears. He was a finished story-teller, and Sloane was deeply interested; but before he had satisfied his healthy appetite his eyelids were dragging heavily. The surgeon did not miss any of these symptoms and rose to speed his leaving.

"You will hear from me later in the day, and we shall try to get the man who robbed you," he said with a smile.

"You're mighty good to me, sir," Sloane said. "I'll do my level best to help. And we can get him!"

The surgeon looked at the younger man enviously and shook his head.

"I suppose I might have felt that way at your age. I wish I were as sure of success as that. But you need all the sleep you will get. I won't keep you any longer."

He was about to see Sloane to the door when the young man asked—

"Is there any reason why I shouldn't do a bit of scouting before I go to bed?"

"In what part of town?"

"I wanted to take a look-see in Chinatown."

"Please sit down a moment."

The surgeon pressed a button as he spoke.

"There is a man in the house, my steward, Ah Sun, who knows more about Chinatown and its people than anybody. Moreover, he knows all about this Blackbeard affair. In fact you can speak perfectly freely to him. I trust him absolutely."

Ah Sun was tall and smooth-faced and blandly dignified—a Chinese gentleman. He bowed like an ambassador. Dr. Wise was saying—

"Ah Sun, this is one of my boys—Dr. Sloane, physician at the penitentiary."

"I am glad to know the doctor. I have heard of him," was the answer in perfect English and a melodious voice.

Sloane had known a few Chinese gentlemen, and he liked this one at sight. He offered his hand with respectful impulsiveness.

"And I am mighty glad to meet you, sir."

At the deferential tone and address the two older men exchanged a quick glance of approval. Dr. Wise explained:

"The doctor was just asking me in reference to the Hasbrouck matter if he had better take a look about Chinatown at this hour. What is your opinion, Ah Sun?"

Ah Sun spoke to Sloane directly—

"May I ask just what or whom you want to see?"

"I was going to inquire for Wing Wo Chong."

The name seemed to echo through the room. Dr. Wise flashed another look at his Chinese friend. That gentleman gave no sign of seeing it as he said softly—

"He is not at home now."

"Then there would be no use in going there."

Although Sloane did not make a question of it, Ah Sun smiled slightly as he said:

"Not if your only purpose was to see Wing Wo Chong. You are concerned about your friend, Mr. Train?"

Again the silence was resonant.

Still standing, they looked from one to the other—Sloane with a surprise so marked that the surgeon chuckled:

"No use beating about the bush. Your friend and partner is well cared for by the gentleman you named. Was that all the scouting you had in mind?"

Sloane hesitated, and Ah Sun again spoke:

"If the doctor wishes to take another look at a certain club-house on Second Avenue I am sure there is no objection, provided he uses extreme caution. It is possible that his friend Parsons may have something to report."

This was too much for Sloane's self-command. His mouth dropped open.

"You— How did you know about Parsons?"

"It's all right."

The surgeon laid a kindly hand on his shoulder and added:

"I told you my friend knew everything. Parsons is all right—a good man for you to know. Is he acting as a body-guard—watching the house on Second Avenue?"

"He promised to take a look now and then," Sloane admitted. "You do seem to know it all, both of you, so I reckon I may as well do as you say and go back to the island. When shall I see you again?"

He moved toward the door, and both Ah Sun and Dr. Wise followed him into the hall. The surgeon answered cheerfully:

"You will see me at the fight tomorrow—I should say tonight—probably before that. You may see or hear from either of us at any time."

He looked at his friend as he spoke and

Ah Sun bowed gravely as he answered:

"At any time. Good night, doctor."

The surgeon saw Sloane to the waiting car and told the chauffeur:

"Take Dr. Sloane wherever he tells you. Good morning, doctor."

Sloane told the man to take him to Fifty-first Street and sat sleepily by his side as they rolled down the avenue. He had many things to think about, but his tired brain refused to work. It must be two o'clock. Dr. Wise didn't seem to make much of the poisoned man—and the mouse. So Blackbeard's name was Hasbrouck; nobody but Barbara Welland knew what he looked like. Ah Sun looked like an ambassador—knew everything; would he see the fight? Men like him and the great surgeon wouldn't see any harm come to Barbara. Where was she now? Alone with the housekeeper in the Second Avenue house? What was to prevent Hasbrouck, or Kelly, from carrying her off?

He came awake with a jerk. He must have dozed between thoughts, for the car was east of Second Avenue on the way to the river. He turned to the driver.

"Dr. Wise said it would be all right to go to Second Avenue and Eighteenth Street. Will you take me there at once? You can leave me there and go home."

"Sure! 'S all the same to me—up all night anyway," growled that worthy as he tramped pedals and jerked levers.

The car swung round, then down-town, while Sloane came more awake at each passing block. She ought not to be left in that big house without protection.

Down in the twenties Sloane suddenly asked the driver—

"Did you ever climb a water-pipe?"

"Huh?" The man pulled himself out of a hypnotic doze and sat up. "No. Did you?"

"No. I've tried a good many things, but I was just thinking."

The man regarded him aslant with suspicion. A block away from the club-house Sloane said:

"You can let me out here. It's one block below, and I don't want to be seen."

"If you're goin' t' try any second-story work I'd like to stick around," the driver said hopefully. "I c'd turn down the mixture so lean nobody'd try to steal 'er. Whaddaya say?"

"No; I don't think Dr. Wise would like

it. I don't want to be seen or— Look at that! Somebody in a rush."

A man had darted out of the side street next the club-house and came toward them on the run. Sloane got back into the car and tried to get his face out of the light from the street-lamp. But as the man came nearer Sloane made out the lean features of Parsons. He got out, and Parsons grabbed him by the arm.

"Come on! I tried to call you up once from the drug-store. I was going to make another stab at it."

He was dragging Sloane across the avenue as he explained:

"I went to Pell Street. Chinaman wasn't at home. I had another feed and prowled back here. Something doing in the house—up-stairs where she is; all dark below. Looks mean!"

As they came to the corner across from the club-house he pointed down the side street to a closed car—an electric.

"Two men got out of that and went into the basement. Is there a way through into her house next door?"

"Yes. H-sh! Listen!"

From somewhere within the house next the club-house came a muffled banging, as of battering on a door. Sloane started with a leap and a hoarse shout:

"They're breaking into her rooms. Come on!"

The only lighted windows in either building were those of the second story of the dwelling-house. The lower windows were strongly shuttered. Sloane banged at the door, but Parsons called to him:

"No use! And not a cop anywhere; but there's a water-pipe!"

"I saw it today!"

Sloane sprang down the steps and darted to the pipe near the corner of the building.

"Give me a back—quick!"

Parsons jumped to obey, squatting at the foot of the pipe.

"Step on my knee—now my shoulder! Up you go! Climb, you handsome —; climb!"

Half-way up Sloane suddenly thought of the cab in the side street and called down:

"You go back and watch the cab! If they come out, call the cops."

The pipe was solid, and the iron supports gave a skittish toe-hold; but just then he heard a muffled call for help—her voice—and somehow he got to the window-level.

He could just reach the open shutter. Would it hold if he swung on it?

Another cry—more faint and muffled. He swung out; kicked in the lower half of the glass. The shutter swung back with him against the wall; another swing and he kicked in the sharp points of glass; once more back to the wall, and this time on the return swing he let go and shot through the hole he had made, feet first.

He landed inside the room flat on his back. He knew there would be somebody there to meet him, so he instantly doubled up and lashed out with both feet at the man who sprang upon him. He got his man in the stomach and rolled away to his feet, gripping the life-preserver that dangled from his wrist.

A second man was at him. He side-stepped and swung the club sidewise at the temple backhanded; and the man dropped like a log.

Now he had time to see that his first assailant was black Matt. That made the third time he had got Matt in the stomach. Matt must be sore; but here he came, showing white teeth in a savage grin.

Sloane slugged viciously at the side of the head. The blow glanced from the thick skull; and Sloane was swept to the floor, rolling over and under the big negro, who was grabbing for his throat. The danger shocked him into a wild explosion of vigor. He doubled up and snapped out, kicked, flailed, even snapped with his teeth—all with the speed of fury.

One heel caught Matt in the ear and drove the black man back, and Sloane was on his feet again. The next instant Matt swept his feet from under him. As Sloane fell his head struck a chair-arm, half-stunning him, and the black hands fastened on his throat. Still flailing and gnashing his teeth uselessly, Sloane went red-blind—A roaring in his ears—His lungs were bursting. Then they burst with a great flash—and a silence!

Pain—pain all over—a horrible tearing at his chest where something crushed and ground. Air! One breath! He couldn't do it— If only—



A SOFT, warm pressure on his lips; his lungs filled without effort and collapsed. Again—his arms were pulled up, then pressed down. One tearing effort; he got air in a great sobbing sigh,

and presently he was alive and looking up into a lovely face that was instantly hidden behind Barbara's hands.

Things were slow in coming back to his sluggish consciousness, but he knew at last that he had been fighting with Matt and a white man. He raised himself and stared about.

"Where—where are they?"

His voice came huskily from his sore throat. Only Barbara was there, and she was freeing herself from a long cord and a blanket that hung about her waist. Her dark-bronze hair fell in masses and hindered her efforts, but her loveliness was a glorious thing to look at—just to sit and look at. She answered in a voice that shook:

"They have gone; I think they heard somebody coming. I don't know, for I was wild; you looked dead."

"I was; Matt got me that time. Somebody called him off?"

Sloane was rubbing his throat with hands still numb. Barbara dropped her eyes suddenly as she said:

"No. He was still—still choking you when I got a turn of this rope around his neck and twisted. I thought he'd never let go. But he did. He would have killed me then, I think; I never saw him like that—like a great ape! But he heard something, picked up the white man and carried him off."

She was at her mirror now and putting up her hair. Sloane drew a long breath with a catch in it.

"Well, you saved my life—and it wasn't at all necessary," he said.

"What do you mean?" She turned on him.

"I mean it was yours any——"

"Listen!" She held up a hand. "They are coming—at last!"

There was a sound of low voices in the hallway, then soft steps on the stairs.

"Where's my club? If I only had a gun!"

Sloane had picked up the life-preserver from the floor and was alertly looking about for something heavier when Barbara smiled at him suddenly.

"You don't have to fight any more. These are friends, and they are late. But they mustn't find you here!"

In sudden panic she urged him toward an open door.

"Get in the closet, quick!"

He found himself shut in; but the door

did not close entirely; and he could see through the crack. Barbara had got back her usual serene composure and was facing the open hall-door.

Sloane was astonished to see Ah Sun appear in the doorway, as dignified and commanding as ever. He seemed to fill the door with his large presence.

"So you are not hurt, Miss Welland," he said with relief in his deep voice. "We were detained, and your would-be captors have escaped."

His eyes swept the room as he spoke, taking in every detail, and he smiled slightly.

"I see Dr. Sloane was more fortunate. He is still here? In the closet perhaps?"

The girl followed his glance about the room. She saw Sloane's hat on the floor and answered with a proud toss of her head:

"Yes. I should not be here now if he had not come through the window just in time. He was very nearly killed. Matt choked him——"

She seemed to choke on the words herself. Sloane stepped from the closet.

"Good morning," he said shortly, picking up his hat and facing Ah Sun. "The question now is what to do with Miss Welland. She can't be left again without some protection."

He made a movement as if he were about to put his arm about Barbara, and she did not shrink from him this time. Ah Sun looked on with bland detachment and observed quietly:

"There are reasons why she should go with us to the house of Wing Wo Chong for the present. She will be amply protected there."

Sloane was doing some quick thinking. Was Ah Sun a confederate of Hasbrouck or Blackbeard, and a traitor to Dr. Wise? Did Barbara know that she was to be the decoy to catch Hasbrouck? He asked her gently:

"Do you want to go? Do you want me to go with you?"

"Yes. I shall be safe there. But I think you had better go back to the island."

"I fear we can't agree to that——" it was Ah Sun's most musical voice—"unless he makes certain promises."

"How will you stop it?" Sloane asked crisply.

"Need we go into that?"

Ah Sun was as serene as ever, but he withdrew partly one of his hands—until

then hidden in his sleeve—disclosing an awkward but perfectly good Colt, equipped with a silencer. At the same time two muscular Chinamen appeared in the doorway as he stepped aside. One of them held a gray cord, smaller than a clothes-line but with a silky, slinky look about it. The other had a large folded net. Ah Sun was again smiling.

"You are a skilful fighter, doctor; but fighting a net is fighting yourself. I assure you it will be to your advantage to follow my suggestions."

Sloane's eyes were narrowing and his face getting hard when Barbara laid a hand on his arm.

"You can believe him. He tells the truth always."

She turned to Ah Sun.

"You said you'd take his word—for what?"

"That for twenty-four hours he tells nothing of what he has seen in this room."

Ah Sun was watching Sloane, who promptly responded—

"I give you my word for that."

With a grave bow Ah Sun turned to Barbara.

"That makes everything much simpler. You will meet Dr. Hasbrouck at Wing Wo Chong's according to our plans, but at ten o'clock instead of noon, since Dr. Wise has learned of the previous appointment. I am also instructed to tell you that we shall take the black bag with us at once."

"What black bag?" the girl asked quickly.

Ah Sun answered as promptly—

"The one that is *not* in the wall-safe," adding with his serene smile, "I noted that the wall-safe down-stairs had been opened and rifled."

"Then everything's all right!"

Barbara spoke happily. Drawing close to Sloane, she said hurriedly:

"Don't worry about me for an instant. I shall be perfectly safe. Ah Sun is just a good friend to all of us. You can go home and go to sleep. I shall see you some time today."

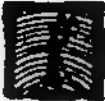
"And now we must waste no more time," interposed the Chinese gentleman.

Barbara had her wrap ready. Sloane put it about her shoulders; then she went to the waste-paper basket by her desk and took from it a black leather bag which she handed to Ah Sun. Sloane followed to the closed car that waited outside, handed her

in and returned Ah Sun's bow as the Chinaman followed her. There was no sign of the two men with the net and cord.

The car rolled noiselessly off. In the chill of early morning the avenue was deserted and ghostly still.

VIII

 SOMEBODY was knocking—let them knock. The hammering came nearer, became more painful; it was on his door. He sat up in bed and shouted—

"What y' want?"

Came the voice of Joe, his trusty valet:

"Phone call, doc. 'Most time for sick line too!"

"Right. Coming!"

He got up, opened the door to get his freshly shined shoes and saw the dep in his door across the hall. The dep nodded happily.

"Morning, doc! Put on your bath-robe and come over. You can use this phone in here."

Sloane thanked him and hurried across the way. At first he did not recognize the breathless voice that came over the wire:

"Hello: Dr. Sloane? Hello! Is this—What? Yes, this is Parsons! Get a man to take your place and get over here sudden! —'s crackin'!"

"How— Who's— What is it? Don't keep me on needles. What——"

"Miss Welland gone—not at the house on Second Avenue, and Doc Wise is pawin' up the ground something scand'lous! Lost his Chinese boss, too!"

"Oh!" Sloane's muscles relaxed. "Tell him not to worry; I know where she is. Let's see; it's after nine. You'll hear from me later. So long!"

"Here! Wait! Hello—hello! That you, Sloane? Want to give me heart-disease? Are you coming? Where will I meet you?"

"It's all right; I don't know where. No time to talk, but we shall meet all right. 'By!"

Sloane hung up and left the phone ringing. As he passed the dep in his rush for the bathroom he called:

"Let 'em ring! When you get him choked off, phone Connors at Charity to take sick line for me today; will you, dep? You're an angel!"

As he splashed in the cold tub and then rubbed the soreness out of his muscles the world looked brighter to Sloane. The sun was shining clear through the barred window. The day before him would see his puzzles solved. Perhaps he'd get back his stolen money. Anyhow he would see Dave—and Barbara.

He got a hurried roll-and-coffee breakfast and rushed up to the hospital. Here were several new faces. Bruce, Kirby, Condon and the Professor had gone while he was asleep, and new trusties were at their duties. He was glad to be rid of Kirby's scowl and the sight of his bandaged neck; but Bruce had been his helpful friend, and the Professor an efficient drug-orderly. Condon had been a silent mystery.

Sloane hurried through to the women's ward for a word with Aunt Mary. She was looking for him over her spectacles as she knitted a wool sock.

"'Ere, my lad! You sit daown and count twenty! You don't gain any time bein' in such a tearin' 'urry. What's new?"

"It would take all day to tell." Sloane sat down, still racing internally. "Of course you know about Clark—poisoned in isolated? Well, I went to Dr. Wise. He said he was helping the Central Office with some special men under him to catch this Blackbeard, or Hasbrouck, and he——"

"'Asbrouck! Ah!"

Aunt Mary stopped knitting.

"Go a'ead."

"He wanted me to watch Miss Welland because Hasbrouck is to come to the city today to meet her. She is the only one who knows him by sight apparently, and he has never been on the island at all. Did you know that?"

"I only 'ear things," said Aunt Mary placidly, "but I notice the prison 'as got quiet. Keep a-goin'!"

And she resumed her knitting as Sloane forged ahead.

"He's got a steward, Dr. Wise has, who looks like a Chinese nobleman—big, smooth chap called Ah Sun—who knows all about everything. He came in and sat in the game. I didn't promise anything, only to look after Miss Welland, and I came away. Then things happened!"

Aunt Mary only looked over her spectacles. He went on:

"I went to Miss Welland's house. She was in her room alone, and somebody was

breaking in—black Matt and a white man. They had her tied and gagged when I mixed in. I got the white man asleep with a lucky swipe, and——"

"'Ow 'd you get in?"

"Water-pipe. Parsons boosted. I kicked in the window. Then the coon got a hold on my throat, and I passed out," Sloane went on, so absorbed that he forgot his promise to Ah Sun.

When he paused, tense and excited, for the wise old lady's comment, she only remarked:

"Sounds like a bum melodrama—mixed-like. But 'ow about your Dr. Wise? It looks like 'e'll be left 'oldin' the bag. Is this 'ere chink toff double-crossin' 'is boss?" Aunt Mary asked severely. "And w'o is Wing-wunk W'at's-'is-Nyme?"

"I don't know—too mixed up for me. I wouldn't be surprized if Blackbeard turned out to be a Chinaman. They are so mighty smooth."

Sloane advanced the idea to see how she would take it.

"Nothink will surprize me any more. If you want to get there at ten you got to shake a leg, my lad. Good luck!"

Before Sloane had got on his feet Aunt Mary stopped him.

"By the by! Watch out for Kelly; 'e's be'ind this dirty work, and 'e 'as got it framed to make 'is getaway right ahfter the fight tonight. A foxy scheme. If I wasn't tied up 'ere— But trot along!"

As he ran down the stairs Sloane recalled that Aunt Mary had not said a word about Blackbeard or the danger of meeting him. It was not like her. But she was right about Kelly; he was a hard man to land with his political pull and friends among the police.

Dr. Wise! Too bad to leave him in the lurch; but Sloane clung to the fact that he had not promised anything but to watch over the girl, and he was doing that now. He pictured her in the house of Wing Wo Chong. In less than an hour she would be meeting the awful Blackbeard, or Hasbrouck; and Sloane saw by his watch that he had just time to reach Chinatown to be present himself.

Parsons was not at the landing to way-lay him, so he continued his rush to Chinatown with growing excitement. He was on Mott Street at a quarter before ten among the queer people who did not seem

to see him, and he took in the strange yet familiar smells and sounds, looked at the upright signs, colored streamers and flapping dragons on the walls—signs of some special festival—with vague apprehension. Anything might happen in this place, as foreign and remote from New York as Peking or Shanghai—those very names harmonized with the squeak of an alto violin that came from an open door close at hand. He stepped into a rich-looking curio-shop with a jade vase in the window and asked a round-faced boy in a skull-cap—

"Where is the house of Wing Wo Chong?"

The boy looked at him placidly as he answered:

"Can not see Wing Wo Chong without ap-point-ment. Not in."

"Does he live here?"

Silence.

"Can I see Ah Sun?"

Still in silence the boy trotted back, passed through rich brocaded curtains and vanished. Sloane waited, picking up a carved image of brown wood that grimaced fixedly. He looked up into the keen eyes of a dried-up old man in a long robe and blue-silk tunic. The keen eyes took him in without moving as the old Chinaman asked—

"Ah Sun expects you?"

"I think so. I want to see him—very much—before ten o'clock."

With a bow the old man dropped his eyes. His face became a blank.

The curtains moved. The old man turned, bowed more reverently to Ah Sun, who entered with unhurried calm and returned the bow with clasped hands before he greeted Sloane.

"Good morning, doctor. Will you follow me, please?"

"Then you don't live here?" Sloane asked after he had followed through the curtains and along a paneled passage.

The black wood panels were ornamented with gilt and garden-scenes. Pungent joss-smoke, faintly mingled with distant odors of hop and *park nor mi*, made the air of another life and people. He felt himself in contact with forces too subtle for him, handled by a mind more adroit than his own, as Ah Sun answered with another question—

"You asked for Wing Wo Chong?"

"Yes. This is his house?"

"Many of these houses belong to Wing Wo Chong."

With this noncommittal answer Ah Sun stopped and swung a panel out across the passage, closing it and opening another at right angles. He said—

"You will notice that a stranger could not find his way without a guide."

Sloane, startled at the expression of his own misgivings, followed in silence while Ah Sun twice repeated the right-angled turns. At last he found himself in a room richly furnished in the Oriental manner and hung with tapestry scenes—the abode of a Chinese gentleman of wealth. As he looked about the room Ah Sun voiced his thought:

"You wish to see Miss Welland. It must be for only a minute or two, for Dr. Hasbrouck will be here soon. He has an appointment in this room."

Crossing the room to another curtained doorway, he was gone a few seconds when the curtains parted to admit Barbara. In her nurse's white duck, flushed and rather breathless, she came to him with a welcome shining in her eyes; but shyness seized him by the throat and choked off his speech. She spoke easily, however.

"Your friend Dave is splendid—a real man in every way. I have tried to read to him, but he insists on talking about 'the Kid' and nothing else. One would think you were the hero of all time."

Her lips curled and her eyes narrowed.

"If you didn't know better," Sloane said. "Haven't you got over your feeling toward me? You look mighty scornful."

She shook her head with pursed lips.

"I never shall; but you are to meet Dr. Hasbrouck here presently. You are not going to give him up, are you?"

"Not if you say so. What do I get as a reward?"

A silvery tinkle sounded at a distance. She held up a hand in warning.

"That means he has come. Be nice to him. 'By!'"

He caught her hand.

"Wait! Why can't you change? Toward me, I mean."

She flashed up at him a look so tell-tale that his heart jumped.

"Because I was foolish about you at sight, silly!"

And she was gone.

In the door Ah Sun appeared, solemnly

impressive. He waited for Sloane to recover his composure and then asked him directly—

"Doctor, have you any intention of betraying Dr. Hasbrouck?"

"Before I answer that," Sloane replied, "I should like to know where you stand—with Hasbrouck, or with Dr. Wise."

He was glad to get it out and settled.

"With both," Ah Sun answered. "Dr. Hasbrouck once laid me under heavy obligations. I am a friend to both, and your friend as well."

The Chinaman's sincerity was plain.

"And you would advise me?" Sloane asked. "For Miss Welland's interest?"

"To listen to what the doctor has to say, and to believe him."

"I am willing," Sloane answered with relief.

For some time he had been puzzling about Ah Sun. A Chinese merchant is a Chinese gentleman, a man of the highest principles. Such a man would not help to assault and rob Dave Train, nor harbor a dangerous crook like Blackbeard. He decided to speak out more plainly.

"On the other hand I can't go back on Dr. Wise," he broke out bluntly. "Are all these stories about Blackbeard false?"

"I do not know," Ah Sun said simply. "I only know that he has seemed to be an honest and kind-hearted gentleman—Dr. Hasbrouck—in all his dealings with me. I believe he has been betrayed by the fighter Kelly and the man you knew in prison as Kirby. Dr. Hasbrouck asked me to help him to set right this case of yours—of yours and your partner's—and to that end he wished you to be present when he met Kirby. I came to tell you just that."

Sloane frowned and asked:

"Kirby! Kirby and Hasbrouck are to meet here in this room? When?"

"Now," Ah Sun said. "Both are here and waiting. Kirby will enter first. Do not be uneasy—he is unarmed—and remember you are only a spectator. Above all, do not attempt to interfere with Dr. Hasbrouck if you wish to live."

Having given this warning as dispassionately as if he were discussing the weather, the Chinaman left the room. Sloane sat watching the curtains through which he had gone.



A RUSTLE at his left turned his attention that way. Kirby entered alone. In a long black coat and a button-behind collar he looked like a clergyman possessed of a devil. His pale face and bloodshot eyes turned on Sloane.

"So you're in this!" He was hoarse and venomous at once. "Where is she?"

His evil glance narrowed, and he took a step toward Sloane, reaching under his coat tails for his hip. Then he stopped, and his hand came back empty.

"Frisked!" he rasped. "So that's the frame-up! You and Aunt Mary were both in it! What have you done with her? I'll get you for this!"

"What are you talking about, Kirby?" Sloane asked. "Do you mean Miriam?"

"You know — well I mean Miriam!" snarled the killer. "My wife! And she's got the kale for both of us. Cough her up or I blow the whole works, — — — you! You — — —"

"Don't try any rough stuff, Kirby!" Sloane stood up, alertly poised. "I shall close my hand this time."

Kirby drew back, although Sloane had not raised his voice; but in his light-gray, bloodshot eyes was the wide, menacing look of the born man-killer. As they stood thus there came a firm step in the passage outside. They heard the high voice of the younger Chinaman coming nearer.

"This way, Dr. Hasbrouck. Dr. Sloane and Mr. Kirby are in this next room."

Sloane stood motionless, staring. Kirby's face had jerked at the name "Hasbrouck" into a grotesque mask of abandoned horror, open-mouthed and twitching. A clear, crisp tone now came through the curtain:

"Very well. Don't disturb your master. Tell the old gentleman down-stairs to come with his two porters in five minutes. I shall have something for him."

Sloane had the feeling that all this had happened before—such as comes at the moment of crisis—yet it was all dream-like and unreal. He was to see the dread Blackbeard! That voice? Where had he heard it?

But the curtains were already rustling—clicking. Sloane turned with an involuntary recoil to face the man who wielded the Lightning Death—the terror of all the criminals.

A large man in a frock coat and white vest—a dignified and aldermanic figure,

perfectly groomed—stepped through with head bowed in courteous acknowledgment to him who held aside the curtain. The same crisp voice went on—

"I thank you, my friend!"

Then Sloane knew, even as the large pompadoured head lifted, showing the clever double-chinned face and bright gray eyes of the Professor!

"Good morning, doctor!"

The clear, long-familiar voice had a new note of cold and ruthless authority that made Sloane shiver as the professor went on:

"I am glad you are here to see a certain matter cleared up. A short job. Kirby! You rat!"

The last words cracked like a rifle. Kirby jumped, but no noise came out of his loose, working mouth. Hasbrouck advanced by slow steps as Kirby shrank back before him and shot cold facts like bullets, aiming a steady forefinger at his prey.

"You soaked booze at the big house until you lost what sense you had! You let Kelly make a cat's-paw of you and tried to set the bulls on me for Train's case! You used the capsule Kelly sent you on Clark's bread, and tried to pin the murder on the doctor here! Kelly will get his later; but *you—get—yours—now!*"

The last in a low, slow rumble.

"Hu-how d-do I know y-you're Hasbrouck?"

Kirby shook all over; his voice cracked hysterically.

"W-why, you *faint!* You're yellow—y-you——"

But he choked, and his knees buckled under him.

"Yellow, am I, Kirby?" Hasbrouck smiled—the familiar, hurt, embarrassed smile which became coldly menacing. "I *am* something of an actor. I admit blood sickens me—always did. But we will let that pass. Your opinion will make no difference to anybody in a few minutes. Did Kelly give you any of the loot from the Train case? If you have got a certain option that Train carried, I might give you a chance."

With Kirby on his knees before him Hasbrouck still smiled, his head tilted and his hands now behind his back. Kirby collapsed.

"I got nothing!" he yammered with frantic haste. "He's out o' town, the —— ——! But gimme a chance! I'll go get

him— I'll go now— Lemme go get——"

"You don't leave this room—on your feet, Kirby. You make me sick!"

Sloane could see Hasbrouck's hands, still behind his back. Hasbrouck was fitting in one palm a dainty, shining toy with a barrel to go between his fingers. Sloane was paralyzed for the moment by the thought that here was Lightning Death!

Kirby meanwhile was mouthing desperate protests and appeals, looking up into Hasbrouck's face, watching the strange, thick-lipped, half-embarrassed smile that might mean compliance. Again he held out beseeching hands.

"I never meant to make trouble for you. Kelly held out on us—gave us all the worst of it. Just one chance——"

But Hasbrouck stopped him.

"No use, Kirby! Don't make a scene. I don't care to see even a dog suffer—a yellow dog. So——"

"—— you!"

Kirby broke into tears—bawled with twisted features and made the first move to reach for Hasbrouck. But already Hasbrouck's hands had come from behind his back, and from his closed right a needle-like stream shot with a low, hissing noise straight into Kirby's distorted face.

Sloane recoiled from the sound of the squirting liquid as if from the warning hiss of a rattler. He saw fine drops of liquid appear on Kirby's cheek—some mingling with a big tear-drop—and then vanish as Kirby's mouth flew open in one stupid gasp. Then Kirby flopped forward on the floor, collapsing in each loose joint; lay still without a tremor or a sound.

Sloane got a faint whiff of bitter-almond odor. Stunned, he watched Hasbrouck pull a special handkerchief from his hip pocket and wipe and wrap up the little lethal instrument. Meanwhile Hasbrouck was talking:

"Keep away from the body for a few moments, doctor. You notice I wrap this in a handkerchief that has been saturated with the neutralizing solution. That is the real invention, and the thing that makes the poison safe to handle."

He stepped to the curtains to call:

"Young man, is our friend the anatomical artist on hand? He might come in as soon as they air the room a bit."

"But he can't. Is he dead?" Sloane whispered and bent over Kirby.

"Oh, yes; perfectly dead," Hasbrouck said cheerfully. "And he was so scared he never even tried to run! A typical bad-man when he's really up against it. In his time he has probably killed a dozen."

Sloane was still weak and paralyzed by the sudden horror of the scene. He stood and looked on passively while the room was aired for a few seconds. Still in a dream-like trance, he saw the little old Chinaman in a blue robe enter with two stocky coolies. The old man stood by and clucked at them while they roped the body knees to head, passed a stout bamboo under the lashings and trotted off with the grisly bundle between them. Within five minutes the room was as quiet and peaceful as it had been when Sloane entered it.

"Now Kirby will contribute to the advancement of science," Hasbrouck said comfortably when he was alone with Sloane again. He sat down and waved Sloane to a seat as he went on:

"He is an artist, that little old man. He prepares those beautiful disarticulated skulls and other anatomical specimens. You will find that couch all right, doctor. Kirby might have been alive now if he hadn't tried to land me!"

Leaning back in his chair, Hasbrouck smiled the odd, embarrassed smile—the smile he had worn while he executed Kirby—as he said—

"And now, doctor, we come to your case!"

IX



SLOANE, still half-dazed by the horror of the scene, sat wondering why he had not tried to interfere—to stop the cold killing of Kirby. What would come next? Now it flashed on him in a blaze. He too had tried to land Hasbrouck. He was next! But Hasbrouck had not hidden one of his hands even. Sloane controlled his voice as he asked:

"What does that mean? That I get mine now?"

"I wish it did," said Hasbrouck cheerfully. "It would simplify things."

"Listen to me!"

Sloane came to his feet with one smooth, tense movement.

"It may be that I am trapped—you may have the drop on me with another poison gun—but I'm not Kirby. I won't take it lying down! Don't move!"

His closed fist had only about a yard to travel. But Hasbrouck was staring at him as if he had gone crazy. Slowly the hurt smile curled the fat lips. Hasbrouck carefully raised both hands palm forward.

"Great Caesar, doctor! You are all twisted. I meant only that I wanted to get back your stolen property—yours and Train's—from that crook Kelly. That is all I am here for—that, and to get things straight for Barbara and Miriam. Wheew!" with an exhalation of relief. "You have got a bad eye on you when you are roused, my boy!"

Sloane had dropped back in his chair and sat wiping the sweat from his brow. Hasbrouck went on:

"Kelly is a fool, some ways, but he has got his hands on Barbara's property—jewels her uncle left her—as well as yours and Train's. Moreover, his game is hard to beat. We can't beat it unless we all pull together.

"I am here to prove to you and Dr. Wise—and your uncle, J. M. Pierpont—that I am not the man you are after. It is Kelly! He rolled Train for his wad. I can prove it. All the evidence points to him. If we pull together we can get him. If we play tag among ourselves Kelly will get away right after the fight tonight; and he will take with him that oil-land option that ought to make you and Train rich! Follow me?"

"Hold up!" Sloane mopped his forehead. "I am still groggy; I was all set to take my dose of Lightning Death. You will have to say it in words of three letters. That Kirby business got my goat!"

He looked sick with horror.

"Waste no sympathy on Kirby!" Hasbrouck said sharply. "He was a homicidal maniac. He would have got one or more of us if I hadn't beaten him to it. Now—" alertly.

"You mean that Kelly is the real Black-beard?" Sloane asked. "And that——"

"Exactly!" Hasbrouck interrupted sharply. "Kelly is the man wanted in the Train case. Moreover, he stole two capsules of my CN compound, and he sent one to Kirby in the pen. But he left too many loose ends. We can get him even now in spite of his pull if Dr. Wise and your uncle will come in with us. But it means fast work and a quick start."

"And there is a chance to get back Miss

Welland's money as well as ours?" Sloane asked eagerly.

"Sure! If we can head him off as soon as the fight is over. But you see the police over there are fixed, so nothing can stop the fight. It's a smooth scheme, for a dub like Kelly," the big man admitted uneasily.

"I see. He won't come back to Manhattan. He will skip from the Jersey side as soon as the fight is over, before anybody can get through the formalities of extradition, or whatever is necessary."

"Good boy!" Hasbrouck's thick lips twisted. "But you want to see your partner, Train, don't you?"

"Can I?" Sloane jumped up eagerly. "Dr. Wise said——"

"You're a doctor yourself. You ought to know whether it will hurt him," Hasbrouck snapped out. "Come along, and remember to ask Train about that option. I've got to get the stage set for Dr. Wise."

He showed Sloane along two right-angled passages and pushed him through a curtain. Sloane was surprised to find that he was in a model sick-room like a private room of a good hospital. He stepped around a screen and was greeted by his old friend cheerily:

"Well, Kid! I thought you were never comin'. I sure did spill all the beans, didn't I? Got over bein' mad at me?"

He held out a steady hand. Except for a bandaged head and fading tan Dave looked as well as ever as the two gripped hands. Sloane managed to growl huskily.

"You darned lobster! How are they treating you?"

Train, a blond giant with a grim, sensitive face, grinned with sheer happiness.

"Same old Kid—prettier'n ever. Watch out now! I'm a sick man, remember! They treat me fine; like royalty. This man Wing Who's-This must be a prince. And the nurses! Boy—hush!"

Suddenly sober and flushing, Train asked:

"You Kid, which one you got your brand on? No stallin' now!"

And the big fellow fixed Sloane with a hostile blue eye.

"Not a chance!"

Sloane began to flush. The man in bed pointed a long finger.

"Now—now! Don't try that—and don't keep me hangin'!"

"Did you ever know me to chase after the ladies?"

Sloane was now almost purple.

"No; it's always the other way. That's why you fell so hard this time. But is it the light-haired, dark-eyed one? Speak up!"

And the big man showed symptoms of getting out of bed.

"It is not. It is the other one, and she hates girl-faced boys; told me so."

"Thank the Lord!" dropping back on his piled pillows, and sitting up again promptly: "For once I play in luck! She said she wanted to live in the Southwest! She'll get her wish; you hear me!"

"You're talking about Miriam, I expect," Sloane observed. "But what are you going to marry on? Have you forgotten we are broke?"

Train answered easily:

"Oh, you'll pull us out all right. You never failed to make good in a pinch. Just go get that hoss-thief they call Kelly—Blackbeard—whatever his name is. He's the crook that bushwhacked me—he and that smoke Matt. You have handled worse propositions, you girl-faced dude!"

And he grinned at his partner with affectionate trust.

"All right, old boss. You've got the right idea. You need to rest and take it easy."

Sloane showed a confidence he didn't feel. He got up from his chair cheerfully.

"But before I leave you to go sleep, tell me what you had in your bag. What did he get from you, exactly?"

Suddenly anxious—

"Can you remember?"

"Easy! There was twenty-two thousand in big bills and a one-month option on a tract worth a million. We can clean up a hundred thousand apiece on it within two days after we get that option back. Uncle Jed — Parsons, you know — is after that tract for his company. You send in that girl—the light-haired one—then you go get it; see?"

"Right you are. So long!"

And with a flash of his best smile Sloane left the room. He had no more idea how he could keep his promise than he had of the whereabouts of "the light-haired one," but he had a whole day before him; a lot could happen in that time.

In the passage he looked about in the hope of a glimpse of Barbara. Instead the light-haired Miriam—she of the wonderful,

dark-brown eyes—beckoned him into the room—the same room he had left with Hasbrouck—and whispered:

"If it is evidence against Kelly you want, I can furnish it. Kelly sent me over to give Kirby the stuff; I didn't know what it was. Kirby will kill me if he can, but——"

She was so terrified that Sloane laid a gentle hand on her shoulder and stopped her.

"Don't worry, little girl! Kirby is dead, and probably your proof won't be needed anyway."

As she looked into his face the color returned to her own, and her eyes lighted up.

"I suppose it's horrible, but I could hug you for that."

"I'll tell you something else. Train says you've got to go Texas."

"Shut your eyes quick, pretty-boy!"

Her own were dancing.

"Quick!"

With his eyes shut he felt his face pulled down and a soft but firm kiss planted squarely on his lips. He opened his eyes to see an empty room, the curtains before the door still swinging.

"A very touching scene!"

The cool voice came from behind him, and he turned to face Barbara Welland. Her lips curled with lofty scorn as she added:

"Such a pity to interrupt; but Dr. Wise has come to see his patient. He wants to see Dr. Sloane if he is here," ironically.

Sloane looked her in the eyes.

"I was telling her about Train."

"It looked like it!"

Again her lips curled. Sloane stroked his nose, looking at her still more gravely, and said slowly—

"Some time soon I shall explain this thing to you, Barbara Welland, so you will understand, I promise you."

She could meet his eyes no longer, said, "I told you Dr. Wise was here," and led the way.

In silence he followed her through a room he had not seen, but which gave upon a passage that led to Train's room. There she left him.

 THE surgeon had just finished his work, and Miriam was replacing the Barton bandage on Train's head as Sloane entered. Dr. Wise looked up from his bichlorid solution. It was a look of cold

surprise that he turned on the younger man.

"So that is how you stand by your promises! And you call yourself a Sloane!"

"Yes, sir. I have met Dr. Hasbrouck, and he is here. But he's not the man we want. Kelly is the man."

The older man turned down his sleeves.

"Hasbrouck would say so," he said. "Any proof?"

"Yes, sir. You have most of it already, and he is waiting to give you more."

"Very well. I ask your pardon for my suspicions and my manner. Let's see this wonderful man. I will go with you."

With no further explanations Sloane led the way back to the room he had left, full of curiosity as to the manner of meeting of these two alert and facile men. Hasbrouck was waiting, and rose with a quiet dignity as Sloane introduced him—

"Dr. Wise, this is Dr. Hasbrouck."

The surgeon was looking at the other man with startling intensity.

"I have seen you before," he said slowly. "I believe it was before the Carnarvon yacht-race, on the——"

"A memory for faces you have, doctor," Hasbrouck interposed easily, "since I wore a full beard at the time, as well as a different name."

"I recall it perfectly. I believe you had a hand in designing the *Buccaneer*. Dr. Sloane, I should like to talk to Dr. Hasbrouck alone, if you will excuse me."

Sloane bowed and took his disappointment away with him. So the Professor was not lying even about that yacht business! How the dep and Lawson would enjoy that! Hasbrouck must be a man of family and cultured associates; and all the crooks had laughed at him—called him a barroom dead-beat, a bluff and a cowardly liar! It was pathetic, and he wanted to tell Barbara about it.

He didn't know where to find her, and he knew he would lose himself in the maze of passages that lay about him. So he paced the room, examined the dim, diffused lighting of the place and kept an ear cocked for a sound of her light step.

At a rustle of a curtain he turned hopefully, but it was only Ah Sun who entered with his never-failing bow and the clasp of his own hands.

"You are impatient to be doing something, no doubt; but it is best to wait until Dr. Wise

learns certain important facts," the serene Oriental informed him. "And since it is no longer necessary to keep up the pretense I may tell you that Wing Wo Chong is simply the name under which I am known to some of my own race. Dr. Wise will not be displeased when he knows that I had no unworthy designs. I used the name Ah Sun because it was expedient at the time.

"I mention this to introduce another matter. I have come to know and to admire your uncle, J. M. Pierpont, in the course of business. He is a great man, a man of power and influence. I think it would be wise for you to go to him frankly for assistance."

At the mention of his uncle, the banking king, Sloane had stiffened.

"I wouldn't ask him for a——"

"I do not mean to ask him for money," Wing interposed melodiously, "but to ask him to use his influence in high places so that we may stop Shad Kelly. Your uncle can speak with authority in the Organization—the very power that is protecting Kelly at this moment—and some influence in that quarter is absolutely necessary."

"I don't want to be mulish about it," Sloane said, looking more mulish than a donkey; "but I don't see myself asking anything of J. M. Pierpont if there is any other way possible. I'll see Kelly get away with every last——"

He stopped with one fist raised.

"No—I'm a liar. I would if I were the only one; but I'd rather be skinned alive."

His jaw still stuck out, oddly squared; but the Chinaman did not alter a line of his bland features as he resumed in his pleasant monotone:

"No other way whatever, because the order has gone forth on both sides of the North River that nothing whatever is to be allowed to interfere with the fight. The order came from the Organization, and only the same power can revoke it."

"——!"

Sloane smacked his fist into his hand and walked some more. At intervals he stopped and made some suggestion which Wing Wo Chong blandly wiped off the slate. They were still at it when Dr. Wise entered with Hasbrouck. The courtly surgeon looked as if he had been stirred deeply, and he spoke to their host with increased respect if possible:

"I have heard things that sound like the

days of the De Medici—things hard to realize; but I am convinced. Your friend Hasbrouck can prove an alibi. There is nothing left for us but to get this man Kelly. Any way, but get him we must for a hundred reasons. Who would suspect that a fighter like him would have the imagination to create such a plot?"

His friend the Chinese merchant showed no elation.

"He borrowed his plan—stole it rather—from my friend Hasbrouck," said Wing, "together with his reputation and his discovery. Another instance of a great power perverted to an ignoble purpose. You see now that our friend was never really an enemy of society, and that I have not really opposed you?"

"So it appears," Dr. Wise admitted gravely. "At any rate there is no evidence against him. All the facts in the Train case point to Kelly, an unsuspected homicidal maniac. Have you convinced this young man that he must pocket his pride?"

As he turned to Sloane, that young man was suddenly ashamed of himself. If an elder and better man did not balk at changing his mind and altering his purpose who was he to stand out?

"Yes," he announced abruptly. "Lead me to it; I'll do anything at all to make good my promise to Train. I promised him to get the crook, and I'll do it if I live!"

"Now you talk like a man." Dr. Wise patted his back approvingly. "We must not waste a minute."

A knock at the door, and a boy announced that a "red-head man ask for Dr. Wise."

"Bless my soul! I forgot Parsons," said the surgeon. "He must have been wandering the streets. Bring him in."

Parsons came in, looking chastened and impressed.

"Some joint, this! And it all belongs to this Wing Wo Chong," he announced. "But I can't find the Grand Mogul himself. You know him, Ah Sun?"

"Let me present you to the proprietor himself then," said Dr. Wise as Ah Sun bowed. "I only learned today that Ah Sun was a name assumed for convenience."

"Gentle-men—hush!" said Parsons in a whisper, but recovered his voice in an instant. "Congratulate you, sir. This plant must set you back some for insurance."

He turned to Dr. Wise to ask:

"Nabbed this bird Blackbeard or Hasbrouck yet? Did he have that oil-land option?"

Dr. Wise shook his head gravely.

"Shad Kelly has the option, and for all practical purposes he is the Blackbeard you have read about in the papers. My friend Dr. Hasbrouck had nothing to do with the Train case. This is the gentleman."

Hasbrouck bowed, and Parsons blinked once.

"I'm still aboard—hangin' on by my teeth and toe-nails. Pleased t' meet you, doctor, and to hear you're no Train-robber. But d'you mean we got to stop the fight? I wanted to take that in myself. Darn the luck!"

"We were just discussing that. We hope to stop Kelly right after the fight, but we need all the luck in the world and all the help we can get."

Hasbrouck explained briskly, and Parsons brightened at once.

"Hot stuff! Count me in. What do I do first and secondly? I got to do something with action in it."

He looked to the three older men for orders, and continued to look at Hasbrouck out of the corners of his eyes, furtively studying this man of doubtful reputation. Hasbrouck caught him at it and smiled—grinned rather. When he really grinned he had a pleasing, almost boyish expression, and Parsons was won at once.

"You come with me."

Hasbrouck beckoned the Westerner to another room and explained—

"You are the man I want for a special mission."

At the door-curtains Hasbrouck looked back to say easily:

"Meanwhile the two doctors might as well get started. It will take some time to reach your man. Wing will stay here as sort of general commanding to receive reports and issue orders."

Much to Sloane's surprise both the surgeon and the Chinese merchant instantly agreed. Dr. Wise nodded to Sloane, and they set out at once to find his uncle, the great banker.

As they rolled along in the electric Sloane burst out:

"I don't like it, leaving Hasbrouck there and taking orders from him blindfold. What's he up to? And Bar—Miss Welland there too!"

"My boy—" Dr. Wise laid a hand on Sloane's knee—"Hasbrouck comes of as good stock as you or I—had the same kind of upbringing—and he has never sunk to a criminal level. You may not believe it, but he could have left the country this morning with a moderate fortune. He is staying to help us out of a genuine, disinterested affection—a fatherly feeling, for you and Barbara."

"I never did anything for him," Sloane protested. "That's too strong."

"You *are* young!" Dr. Wise smiled and sighed. "You only defended him from ridicule; but he is sensitive—has no family ties. You will understand some day."

"I don't like it just the same," Sloane persisted. "You didn't see him kill Kirby in cold blood! I don't like to leave Bar—Miss Welland in his care."

"I am glad I didn't see it," said the surgeon gravely. "But it was really done in self-defense. Kirby was already a murderer and bent on more killing—a homicidal maniac of the most dangerous sort; a man who needed to be removed."

The face of the older man lost its cloud of worryment gradually as he looked at Sloane. He even smiled as he added:

"Certainly Hasbrouck is a remarkable man. Half an hour ago you were urging his innocence on me; now I am pleading his cause with you. You surely don't suspect him with all the evidence pointing to Kelly?"

"N-no—but I don't like to leave her there, just the same," Sloane persisted.

"And Wing Wo Chong would not permit anything wrong or underhand," said Dr. Wise. "For all his two names, I am sure of his absolute integrity. I have known him for years. Cheer up and get ready to meet your uncle. Try to meet him half-way."

Sloane's father had died while he was a junior in college, and he had quarreled with his uncle straightway. For five years not a word or message had passed between them. At present Sloane felt toward the great banker only a fierce and proud resentment, but he really longed to see his aunt—Pierpont's wife and Sloane's father's sister—his only living blood-relative.

Dr. Wise's car got into the evening jam. They were delayed at every turn, and reached the down-town banking establishment only to find that the magnate had gone home.

"We should have started for the house at first," said the surgeon. "The time is getting short, and it's all the more necessary to have his help. We must have it!"

[C] IN THE huge granite and iron mansion uptown the surgeon was shown at once into the great oaken library, book-walled to the ceiling, while Sloane was left to wander from painting to statue in the feudal entrance hall. The potentate sat at a dark mahogany writing-table and looked up with a gruff:

"Well, Henry, it's about time! What is it—a new charity?"

"No. Close that drawer. You don't need a check-book this time. Your nephew, Stuart Sloane, is waiting in the hall."

The banker frowned.

"Handsome and spineless as ever, I suppose, and looking for a large allowance."

"See here, John." Dr. Wise tilted his head and fitted together the tips of his fingers. "You are a fight fan, I believe, as much as ever?"

"More. I still box with old Jem Martin for exercise; keeps a man young, he says. Go with me to the fight tonight. I've got the tickets."

"Then you may remember the Texas Kid, the unknown who disappeared?"

"Has he turned up again?" asked the banker eagerly.

"Stuart Sloane is the Texas Kid," Dr. Wise said mildly. "He had to make a stake to go into the Klondike."

And while the banker sat, boring into him with his deep-set, dark eyes, the surgeon proceeded to give a terse account of Sloane's adventures up to date. He ended by saying:

"So, you see, Sloane will lose all he has unless we can arrest Kelly before he can leave the country. Kelly has everything ready to get away in the confusion following the fight. It is a deep scheme, for he is guarded against any kind of approach—guarded by all the influence of the great ring you belong to—and it will not be easy to get him indicted and extradited. He is already in New Jersey, and there he will stay until his getaway."

The big banker's mind was working as he listened, as was proved by the burning of his eyes under their level brows. He needed no repetitions, asked no questions. When the surgeon finished, however, Pierpont looked at the clock over the heavy mantel—once.

"Hm!" he said gravely. "Time enough. Bring the boy in."

And as he got quickly to his feet the famous surgeon drew a great breath of relief. He returned with Sloane, keeping in the background himself, for no introduction was needed.

Pierpont was a tall man of commanding presence, with a white, military mustache and ruddy, strong-jawed face, while Sloane's lithe, graceful figure and flushed, fine features made a vivid picture of contrast. The younger man met his uncle's eyes with unsmiling steadiness. Pierpont spoke his mind abruptly:

"You are all Sloane—the wild one with a girl-face that happens every other generation; deceptive demons every one of you. But you are the first of your name to enter the prize-ring. You must be proud of the distinction."

Although his uncle's tone had an edge to it Sloane answered at once—

"I am not bragging about it; but I'm not ashamed of it."

Under the velvet of his low voice there was the ring of steel, and the older man's deep eyes lighted with the relish for combat.

"Stiff-necked as the —; you would be; always were. But where do you keep it—a punch to put out Kendal? Let's feel your muscles."

As he explored with knowing hands, the older man's face showed stunned surprise. He turned to Dr. Wise.

"Shoulder-muscles like old Fitz himself! Henry, the boy's a heaven-born fighter. If he had twenty pounds and an inch more reach with the Demon Sloane temperament, I'd bet on him to stop Kelly himself. He must take in the fight with us."

"But what about that Kelly business?" Sloane had begun, when his uncle interrupted him.

"Time enough for that. Why didn't you write to me, you dainty young dandy, when you wanted a stake for your Klondike prospecting? And what license had you to fly off the handle when I made you a proposition after your father's death?"

"You told me I could take a place in the bank or clear out. I took you at your word and cleared out," Sloane answered coldly. "I assumed that the incident was closed."

His uncle flashed back—

"So you have come here now just to tell me to go to —?"

"For myself I'd never ask you for a thin dime if I were starving."

"But to please me you will accept a quarterly allowance, I suppose."

The banker was about to add more sarcasm when Dr. Wise interposed:

"Gentlemen! You are both too full of virile pugnacity to get together. John, I told you that Stuart did not want any financial——"

"I want nothing but some outdoor air!" announced the young man hoarsely.

Sloane was headed for the door when the surgeon stopped him by holding his arm.

"Regular Demon Sloane temper," growled the banker, adding grudgingly, "I can see I was wrong, however, and I beg his pardon."

"Let's shake hands and start over," Sloane proposed with his sudden, wide-flashing smile that no man could resist.

Pierpont met him half-way, and the three men at once went into a committee of the whole on ways and means.

Pierpont knew all the ropes and had the power to pull them. He was frankly pleased to find that it would not be necessary to stop the fight, because he wanted to see it; but he was positive that Kelly could be taken as soon as it was over. Once started, he carried the thing through with increasing momentum—had his private wires humming and his lieutenants on the jump while Dr. Wise and Sloane looked on with growing amazement and hope.

"It'll come off as soon as Kelly puts Sharbett out. That will be about the eighth round, barring a fluke," the banker announced, setting down his desk-phone at last. "And he will never suspect it is coming. You have nothing to do but enjoy the fight. We have ring-side seats. But that's no place for your girl down there, Stuart. I think your aunt has come in—she runs this house; we will put it up to her."

Sloane, already well started on one of his thorough blushes, began to protest:

"But I haven't— She won't——"

"Yes, she will. Don't tell *me!* You've got the Sloane eye. She will if she is human."

A maid had appeared in response to his ring, and he turned to demand:

"Tell your mistress her nephew is here. Ask her if she can see him before she dresses for dinner, and order her car brought round. I think she will want to go downtown and get her at once."

He added the last as the girl left the room,

speaking to Sloane in a careless, all-in-the-family fashion with the final detail—

"She will probably put you in the south wing over my quarters."

Dr. Wise signaled to the nephew not to oppose his uncle. In a moment Stuart's aunt entered, still dressed for the street. A sweet-voiced woman, still lovely and of queenly presence—that is, of an unassuming simplicity and kindness—she truly ruled the house and all within it, including J. M. Pierpont.

She had no eyes for any one but her handsome nephew from the instant she entered the room. In about half the time it had taken her able husband she had a better grasp of the human need of the hour.

"Of course Stuart is right. That girl never should have been left there for an instant," she announced. "Did you order my car, John?"

"I did, madam. It is waiting."

Her husband bowed formally.

"You have occasional glimmerings of sense. Come on, Stuart; we have a lot to talk over on the way. I knew her mother well. She married one of the Philadelphia Wellands."

They left the house in the glow of real family affection, a thing unknown to him for years. It seemed to Sloane that he was too happy. It seemed too good to last; and it was.

X

THE car had to be left at the entrance of the narrow street, and with his aunt Sloane walked to Wing Wo Chong's curio shop. The boy in attendance ran to the rear as they entered, and both Wing Wo Chong and Dr. Hasbrouck came to meet them. At the sight of them Sloane sensed trouble coming. Hasbrouck hardly waited for an introduction before he asked Sloane quickly:

"What urgent case was Dr. Wise called to operate in Jersey City? I have been worried about it ever since Barbara left. I should not have permitted it if I had been here."

"What's that?" Sloane sprang at Hasbrouck. "She has gone! How? When? With whom? Quick!"

"I was just telling Wing."

Hasbrouck was pale with anxiety and spoke rapidly:

"I was out at the moment; so was he. Dr. Wise's chauffeur came here. He said

Dr. Wise had to operate in a hurry. An urgent case in Jersey City. He wanted Barbara to assist; no one else would do. He said Dr. Wise's car was at the entrance to the street. And she went with him."

Wing Wo Chong made a low sound like a moan. Sloane struck his hands together.

"But we just left Dr. Wise; his car is up-town, and the driver."

"Was the man who came short, with receding chin?" suddenly asked the Chinaman, who had been Dr. Wise's steward and knew all his affairs.

He turned to the boy in the shop and asked a quick question in Chinese. The boy answered, and Wing threw up his hands in a helpless gesture.

"It is the chauffeur Dr. Wise discharged for stealing only two days ago, and Miss Welland did not know of the change."

"Kelly!" said Hasbrouck sharply. "He hired the crook, and he was watching his chance."

"What are we standing here for?" Sloane demanded frantically. "How long has she been gone? Which way? She may be struggling with him now!"

He was shaking with the effort to hold himself under control.

"They had a half-hour start when I returned," Wing Wo Chong said quietly. "Long enough to get to the ferry; and the man would change cars on the other side. I could see no hope in pursuit."

"But she could call out—call for help—No! She wouldn't!" Sloane caught himself up as he realized. "She wouldn't suspect anything wrong until she got there. Hasbrouck!"

He turned on the fat man grimly.

"You let her go—let her out of your sight! I hold you responsible! If anything happens to her you——"

Sloane's glittering eyes roused the fat man to sudden defense.

"Kill me right now if it will make you feel better."

Hasbrouck's smile was the hurt, half-frightened smirk Sloane had seen so often as he threw out his hands.

"What more can I do? We have got a spy out already who will bring any news from Kelly's camp."

"A spy! Who?" demanded Sloane.

"Parsons."

Hasbrouck regained some of his offhand self-satisfaction. "I sent him over to get

in touch with Bruce. I can't claim that I foresaw any such emergency as this, but this morning Bruce told me he was going to try to get a place as a rubber or helper in Kelly's camp. I saw we should need a messenger to bring to us any information that Bruce might pick up, and that was the job I had for Parsons."

"What's all this? Bruce in Kelly's camp?" Sloane was incredulous. "I'd swear Bruce was my friend. Why would he go over to the enemy?"

"As a spy, man!" said Hasbrouck impatiently. "Didn't I tell you I saw him early this morning as soon as he got out, and that he was doing this for you on his own hook?"

"You did not," Sloane said sharply. "This is the first I heard of it. But it was bully of Bruce to do it unasked. So you sent Parsons over to Jersey City to get in touch with Bruce, and you think he will bring word if Ba—Miss Welland is taken there. Suppose she isn't taken there?"

"Then we have got to shadow Kelly after the fight. We shall find her then, if we don't before. In fact I think your best plan is to stay right here and wait for some news through the Bruce-Parsons route. If you start off wild now you may miss Parsons on his way here, or one of Kelly's yeggs may take a shy at you. You can be sure you will get it, and get it right, if you try to break into Kelly's camp now," Hasbrouck finished menacingly.

"You think so!"

The look he gave Hasbrouck made that gentleman draw back in alarm. Sloane turned from him in savage disgust and met his aunt's understanding eyes. He had forgotten her. She forestalled his apology with a hand on his arm.

"Too bad! Show me to my car, my dear boy!"

They were on the narrow sidewalk when she said:

"I don't like that Hasbrouck's eye. Neither do you. You had better stay right here where you can keep an eye on him. Don't let him out of your sight for an instant. I shall tell your uncle of this kidnaping, and we will have this Kelly's camp surrounded by an army of private detectives. She can't come to harm; there isn't time. So keep up your courage, Stuart Sloane! It takes the highest grade of courage to wait and do nothing."

"Just the one thing I never could do,"

Sloane declared with disgust. "So there's no use in trying. I can make a disturbance if nothing more; got to!"

"Now be sensible," his aunt begged softly. "For her sake! I don't trust this man Hasbrouck in spite of the whole lot of them—your uncle, Dr. Wise and Wing Wo Chong—and if you don't watch him he may slip away and make his getaway—isn't that what they call it?—with Barbara and his loot. I beg you, in *her* name!"

She stood at the door of her car now, waiting confidently.

"All right! My brains are no use just now. I will use yours," he decided.

"Good boy! Go right back, and don't let him out of sight!"

She held up her face for another kiss, saying:

"For luck—and to help you get in practice again. Bring her straight to me, no matter what time of night or morning. So long!"

She waved as she went.

He was wonderfully heartened by her confidence, but it was a nightmare hour that he passed waiting about the curio shop and walking the evening streets of Chinatown with Hasbrouck. That fat and self-satisfied individual did not seem to feel any coolness between them, but held forth at great length on the customs and civilization that were illustrated by the scenes around them. Sloane listened and wondered if this man at his side was a heartless and depraved criminal or a misunderstood philosopher and philanthropist, what time the hands of his watch stood still.

About them the queer evening life of the quarter flowed with its clucking, singsong talk, broken at times by the squeak of an alto violin, the thump of a drum or tinkle of porcelain. From interiors never seen yet glimpsed as strangely familiar came smells of cooking shark-fin, chow mein or chicken chop suey. Hasbrouck seemed genuinely delighted to explain it all.

Then all at once things began to happen again. First Parsons came skidding around the corner of the narrow street, upsetting a basket of heathen garden-truck.

"She's all right! She's all right!"

Those were the first breathless words he got out. Sloane dragged him into the room back of the curio shop.

"Thank God! How d'you know?"

He shook Parsons to shake it out faster.

"Bruce got a look at her, and he said nothing could happen to her till after the fight; they're too busy, and he's watching the place, Bruce is. Leggo my throat! It's time to be starting for the fight now. Here they are! Quit!"

Sloane relaxed with a great sigh of relief. All about were fresh and hopeful faces—a pleasure-bent party going to the fight; his uncle, Dr. Wise and a man introduced as Jones who, he learned, was head of a detective agency—all in the car with him. He fell asleep as soon as he was seated from sheer exhaustion and reaction from nerve-strain after he had charged Jones to keep an eye on the fat man in front. Once he roused enough to realize that the cab was on the ferry-boat in a thick jam of vehicles. He heard Jones saying guardedly to his uncle:

"Somebody must have helped Kelly dope it out. It was smooth. Nobody could get at him, even his crowd, until after the fight, and then they'd have to break in his dressing-room door. By the time they got inside he'd have been on the tug going down the bay. Once outside the limit nobody could touch him, and he could wait for the boat to take him off."

The banker here broke in—

"Sure the Jersey officers will be there in time with the papers?"

"Sure—before the preliminaries are over. Anyway I got enough men to hold his gang of yeggs if it comes to a show-down—until the bulls get busy."

"We don't want a gun-battle if we can help it; but just as well be ready."

Sloane had heard it before, and words didn't help anyhow. He again drooped off.



"HERE we are, boy!"

His uncle was shaking him.

"Wake up and help us buck the line! Who would have expected such a crowd?"

In a shouting tangle of carriages and cars they got out in the half-dark. Sloane helped force a passage to the entrance of the huge rink through a crowd that jammed and hustled savagely. In the outskirts of the city there were dark vacant lots about the building; but once inside the wide doors the bright light was dazzling.

He was rapidly coming to his full senses, shaking off the drowsiness as he worked his muscles in the crush. He felt rested now and ready for anything. With the swelling

tide of life came a clear vision of what was before him. He shook himself and looked round at the rest of the party with a reassuring grin.

"I'm on the job. Hang on to my coat tails and we're off!" he called to them.

At the head of the file he forced his way, dragging the others after him. With the help of occasional ushers they reached their ring-side seats. They were next to the ropes near one corner, and close to the end of the press table.

Sloane drank in every detail of the already packed crowd—a dense mass of faces on all sides, all fierce with anticipation—and he responded with a thrill that stirred the depths of the primitive fighting man within him. In front, through the ropes, he could see a narrow lane to the dressing-rooms. He fixed the place in mind, for that was where Kelly would come!

He made sure that Jones was watching Hasbrouck, and turned to view the hall. The reporters were jotting down the arrival of the great banker Pierpont, and in the front rows were many other faces familiar to Sunday supplements. Everybody was there. It was a great occasion, the Kelly-Sharbett fight, for the winner would challenge the champion.

From a balcony came yells and cat-calls, peanut-shucks and orange-peel, expressing the people in holiday mood. All was ready but the fighters. The ring was still empty.

Suddenly the roped square was invaded. The announcer appeared and introduced the referee. Greetings from the gallery. Then the two lightweight contenders in the first preliminary were brought to the front for a mild demonstration. The formalities were rushed through with advice from the upper tiers, and in a surprisingly short time the two lean boys—they looked half-grown—were darting out of their corners and at it—*slap—biff—bapp*. The crowd gave its first yawp of moderate delight. This was only soup before meat to come—raw meat.

While the first round warmed up to a fast slugging match and the crowd began to give tongue in earnest, Sloane saw a short figure worming its way down the lane from the dressing-rooms, to disappear on the other side of the ring. A minute later Bruce's small, alert face poked up beside his shoulder.

"Listen," Bruce whispered huskily. "Kel-

ly's got a Yale lock on his dressing-room and a trap sawed in the floor for a get-away. I bored a peep-hole at the back, and I'll keep you posted. He hasn't come yet. *Sss-tt*"

And he was gone. Sloane was feeling himself once more.

"What was that?"

Pierpont looked around as Bruce vanished.

"A dog?" he asked.

"A private dick of mine," Sloane answered, eyes on the ring. "That boy is out!" as one of the lightweights went down to stay.

His uncle looked at him keenly.

"You seem to have come to life. Heard some good news?"

Sloane only shook his head slightly. The crowd was yelling, and the referee was swinging his arm over the prostrate loser.

"There is Richards over there—" His uncle pointed out—"the promoter. He looks worried. I don't see why; he has got his gate-money, even if each fight only lasts one round."

Jones heard the last remark as the noise died down and leaned forward on the banker's farther side to say quickly—

"If the other two go as fast as that our friends will not be here in time."

With a stab of fear Sloane got his meaning—that Kelly might escape after all, and he began to do some desperate thinking. This Kelly now! A wild hope infused him.

In the wait for the second and last preliminary the announcer introduced some prominent sporting characters to keep the many-headed beast pacified and amused. Some of these notables got a welcome; some got advice from the peanut section.

Most warmly welcomed were two white-haired but ruddy-faced old ex-champions, Pat Donovan of the N. Y. A. C. and Jem Martin of Senter's gymnasium, ex-champion middleweight of Great Britain. When they had made their bow both of them came down at the near corner.

Donovan stopped to shake hands with Pierpont, and Martin came to Sloane to ask where he had been for two days. Room was made for the two popular old warriors, and Sloane got Martin next to himself.

They continued in consultation while the middleweights were introduced and set in motion; then the noise made talk impossible. These two were as fast as the

lightweights, and their punches had more beef behind them. Blood spurted from the first blow, and the crowd rose to it with a bellow. The bellow merged into a steady roar. The shorter of the two men was knocked down. The roar subsided while the referee counted up to eight, when Shorty got on his feet and rushed. The roar swelled and thundered while Shorty bored his man to the ropes and knocked his head from side to side with right and left smashes until he dropped through the ropes and was saved only by the gong.

"He ought to finish him next round," the banker told Sloane; but Sloane was eagerly urging something on the old fighter Martin.

When the bell sounded the short man came out of his corner slugging. He never let up until he had his man on the ropes again, and within the first minute it was all over. The short man's hand was held up high while the building rocked to the shrieks and whistles of the gallery.

That was the stuff! Just what a couple of preliminary bouts should be—fast and snappy; a fit introduction to a real heavy-weight fight. Now for the real thing!

There was a stir and a steady rumble of talk. Shouts of greeting and gloating comment flew about in keen expectation of the real feast to come.

More introductions in the ring. A near-champion wanted to challenge the winner or anybody else. He retired to a chorus of boos.

A pull at Sloane's sleeve, and Bruce was whispering in his ear:

"Watch out for an offside play! I think Kelly's got her and the koot in his dressing-room, but I can't tell. They found my hole and plugged it, but he's smuggling something in or out through the trap. And there is something wrong in Sharbett's room—rushing in and out. Somebody groaning!" Bruce was excited. "Look out for a foul!"

Before Sloane could ask a question the promoter, Richards, was talking to the banker. Richards was white and shaking.

"Mr. Pierpont, I hear you got a lot of dicks here. Could you spare me a few men to protect me?"

"What's the matter?"

The banker signed to his friends to form a fence to keep back eavesdroppers. Donovan and Martin pushed back the paper men.

"I have got to announce no fight," Richards whispered shakily. "Some crook has

doped Sharbett. He is so sick he can't sit up. I shall be mobbed and beaten up by this wild lot of animals."

"Then we shall need all our men," Jones put in with a snap of his jaws as he turned to Pierpont. "We can't spare one."

While the terrified promoter was pleading that he would be torn in pieces Bruce was whispering to Sloane:

"That's Kelly's game! He don't care about the fight, so he gets away an hour or so sooner. And he'll put it over!"

"Why not arrest Kelly now?" the banker was proposing. "We have got enough on him to——"

"Not for mine!"

Richards shrugged, and explained:

"He's a favorite with the crowd, and the first sign of any funny business there'll be a riot. They won't wait much longer, either. Hear that?"

The frightened man turned a shade lighter gray as the shouts became more insistent, mingled with hoots and cat-calls:

"Come on—come on!"

"No stalling; trot out the fighters!"

"No frame-up this time!"

"Shad Kelly—Eat—Em-Up Shad!"

Followed by an organized, tramping staccato:

"Kelly! Kelly! We—want—Kelly!"

Meanwhile Sloane whispered to Martin. Jones exchanged looks with the banker and shook his head. Pierpont groaned—

"Where are those fool officers with the warrant?"

"Listen here!"

Sloane forced himself between the promoter and his uncle and said:

"It is simple enough. He has got to be kept here until he can be taken—this Kelly," with a vicious snap. "Put me in against him. I can hold him until the warrants come, and I want another lick at him."

Richards stared from Sloane to old Martin. The old fighter nodded quietly.

"Ah, 'e can 'old 'im six rounds. 'E's a shifty fighter with a stiff left—the Texas Kid!"

He put stress on the name.

"The Texas Kid! Jem, are you crazy, or am I?"

Richards caught Martin's arm.

"He'd be a drawing card if we had him," the promoter added.

"You 'ave got 'im—" again Martin

nodded with his hand on Sloane's shoulder—"right 'ere, and in good condition."

As the dazed promoter listened to Martin's terse explanation he became himself again, taking control with new energy.

"It's a regular miracle—a regular ——— miracle, and it will just about save my skin. You won't lose by it, Kid!" he told Sloane heartily. "Jem, you take him to the dressing-rooms. My boys will fix him up with clouts and rubber bottoms. Will you be in his corner? I want to announce it."

"The two av us!" Donovan jumped up to volunteer. "Tell 'em we ga'rntee a real scrap, and the lad will be handled right."

"Tell me, Pat—" Pierpont detained Donovan as he was about to follow Sloane—"has the boy a chance to lick the crook?"

"Nary chance," Donovan answered cheerily. "But he'll show ye some pretty work and a left-hand sleepwallop—a rare thing in a right-hander."

He was off after Martin and Sloane. The banker turned to the chief of his private detectives, Jones, with a worried frown.

"What's the use in his getting all mauled up then? Your men can hold Kelly—here he comes now; they can surround the ring and keep the police in an argument until the papers come."

"Not with this mob about."

Jones shook his head as he went on:

"Kelly is a favorite just now, and the crowd would take it for a frame-up to stop the fight. Between the mob and the police we'd be eaten alive. Hear that!" as the crowd roared and shrieked a welcome to the big fighter.

Jones turned to Hasbrouck at his side.

"Keep out of Kelly's sight! He never intended to fight, and if he sees you with us he may make some sort of a break to get away now. Get down behind us!"

Hasbrouck disappeared on the instant, and Jones lost sight of him in the confusion. Kelly was in the ring now, taking his welcome with the air of an emperor—barely bowing to right and left. His was the torso of a gladiator. His heavy neck and hairy chest showed through an open bathrobe of dark green. His curly head was small and his eyes too close-set, or he would have been a handsome man. Those small eyes, too, had a trick of side-slipping.

The banker took a long look across the ring to where Kelly took his seat in his corner.

"He's a powerful bruiser," he said aside to Jones. "Stuart will be smashed to a pulp. I'd rather see a gun-battle with the crowd. No sign of the officers with the warrants?"

Jones shook his hand gloomily.

"Something has happened to them, sure. But here comes your boy."

In an old brown bathrobe Sloane had made his way to the ring-side almost unnoticed. He got through the ropes, followed by the two old ring-generals, Martin and Donovan, while Richards took the center of the ring and held up his hand for silence.



"GENTLEMEN!" the promoter finally made himself heard. "I have to announce a change in the program, but let me say first that there will be a fight and a good one! Mr. Sharbett has been taken ill within the last hour. He is too sick to sit up. But his place will be taken by the man who put out Kendal—the mysterious fighter who disappeared—the 'Texas Kid!'"

Richards had got thus far before the crowd got the force of his meaning. Then they broke loose:

"Fake!"

"Swindle!"

"Give us our money!"

"Faker!"

"Robber!"

The roar swelled.

"Gentlemen—one moment!"

Richards beckoned Martin and Donovan up beside him, and the racket subsided.

"You know these two men. They will answer for the genuine Texas Kid, being the— the genuine Texas Kid——"

Yelps of:

"Yow! Do it again!"

"They will both be in the Kid's corner!" Richards shouted desperately. "They say their man is in condition and will go at least six rounds. Moreover, our biggest banker is prepared to cover——"

His voice was drowned out:

"Dry up!"

"Rotten!"

"You can't make a speech!"

"You're rotten!"

"Trot out the Kid—trot 'im out!"

"Cough 'im up!"

A brown-robed figure rose in one corner, and the uproar died down until Richards could be heard shouting:

"Gentlemen! I introduce the mysterious conqueror of 'the Assassin' Kendal — *the Texas Kid!*"

For one staring moment there was a hush as the Kid stepped through between Martin and Donovan. There was craning of necks and a breeze of whispering comment, of curiosity to see the man who had been the fighting sensation, then a scattering explosion of boos and cat-calls. Shrill falsetto cries of:

"Goodness Agnes!"

"Send 'im to mama!"

"Sweet Heavens, Maggie!"

"Ah—Weginald!"

"Ah there, cutie!"

And a deep bass boom, "Ah-h, —!" was followed by a rush of vacant laughter.

In contrast to the beefy Kelly, Sloane's fine skin and sensitive, regular face, with his deceptively slender build, roused the mob to ridicule. But at that instant Sloane flashed his broad, delightful smile with all its suggestion of abounding virility, and in response to Martin's bark, "Strip!" he slipped off his robe. Somebody at the press table let out an unconscious:

"Ah-h-h! Whee-e-e!"

A whisper spread in widening circles.

Even the thickest tough in the gallery could see masculine beauty, and the noise gradually lessened and gave way to whispers as local disputes arose.

In the ring the usual preparations were rushed through. Kelly had at first looked startled and worried, but when his opponent appeared he had thrown back his head with a wide-mouthed laugh while his gloves were tied on. The Kid on the other hand was smiling as if he were enjoying the situation. Only a close observer could see in that smile a hint of wickedness when it was turned to meet Kelly's scowl.

At the bell the men were up and together, circling and feinting, trying out. For the moment there was a silence in tribute to the sheer beauty of the spectacle—two perfect specimens of physical manhood in action. Of all created things there is but one sight more beautiful.

As they sized up each other's footwork, feinting and dancing away, it was clear that Kelly was quick and shifty; but the Kid was a poem in motion. As smoothly and swiftly as a flickering shadow he was here, there, and away again without effort or weight; yet the smoothly rippling muscles

of shoulders and back told a tale of a wicked driving-power behind his easy-playing arms. His eyes never left Kelly's, holding them with a steely, level glitter that never wavered or waned.

His uncle, the great banker, relaxed his taut muscles with a long sigh. The boy might get out alive after all.

Kelly had got his distance and the speed of his man, and within the first minute decided to finish him right now, so his plans would not be disarranged.

Suddenly his feet began to beat the floor with a firmer rhythm.

"Now, Clarence, say your prayers!" belled a bull-like voice from on high.

The Kid's smile was seen to broaden, but he seemed to invite destruction. Kelly lashed out with savage swings, right-left-right-left, boring in. Sloane eased back, let the first two fall short, ducked the third, and as the fourth started he lifted his left with a snap of knees and body—*chuck!*—into Kelly's advancing chin.

Kelly's head jerked up, and he dropped flat on his face, sprawl.

"That's the *place*—that's the *place!*" bawled the big voice from the gallery.

A ripple of laughter mingled with the shout of surprise and satisfaction.

Kelly took his time, got up and danced away, shaking his head and scowling, then circled for an opening and rushed again. More cautious with his head now, he still followed the Kid persistently and snapped home every blow with weight behind it, warily watching for a shot at the "button," or point of the jaw where a full swing meant a knockout.

The Kid was showing class now in every easy movement, parrying when he could not duck or sidestep, slipping out of close-quarter work, now and then jerking a stiff jolt into the body. Already a red blotch over Kelly's heart showed how his jabs had told.

The excitement of the mob was mounting as it became more plain that the Kid could take care of himself. Although the bulk of the cries of encouragement were to Kelly the favorite, now and then a lone shout came for the Kid. His adviser on the upper level once stated:

"You know *where*, Kid; you know *where!* Let him eat his heart!"

As if in response to this cryptic suggestion at that moment Sloane caught Kelly on the chin a second time with a jolt that set back

his head. A shout of relish roused Kelly, and he came back with a rush. Sloane met him half-way, and they traded wallops in mid-ring until the bell called them off. In a crash of applause the men went to their corners.

"Clean work! Keep a-drillin' at 'is ribs," Martin advised after Sloane was sponged. "It ain't showy, but tells on 'is wind."

He plied the towel with an expert flap and looked to Donovan for confirmation. The old Irish battler was kneading the chest-muscles, and he nodded with the whisper:

"Watch your belly and kidneys. He'll be foul in' ye if he sees the chance."

"No news from outside?" Sloane asked, twisting his head around to his uncle and Jones, who had come up to the ropes. His uncle shook his head, but his eyes were afire with pride and excitement as he whispered hoarsely:

"No news; but you are a wonder, youngster. Can you keep it up a few more rounds?"

Sloane grinned and shook his head.

"Thanks—but we haven't mixed it yet. I can tell better then."

He was springing forward to the clang of the gong as he finished. The second round was on. From the very start it was fast work. Kelly drove and swung for the head and neck, trying again for a clean knockout with a speed and vicious insistence that roused his admirers to loud acclaim. The Kid still showed perfect judgment of distance and time, kept just out of reach or at one side, ducking and side-stepping but never retreating, then jerking a stiff jab to ribs or heart; and every jab hurt. His mocking smile seemed to drive Kelly to more furious striving; but always he was elsewhere when the swing swished past. To the knowing among the spectators it was an exhilarating show of skill, but to the blood-hungry it was tantalizing.

"Smash him! Stave in his slats!" came a hoarse chorus. "You got him on the run! He's yellow! Bash his sweet face!"

Kelly tried earnestly, but still to no purpose. Finally with a quick shift to the left he ducked into a clinch. He roughed and bored the Kid back to the ropes, jolting savagely at stomach and ribs with short-arm jabs—some of them foul under cover of his own body. As soon as the referee could reach and separate them Kelly repeated his rush, charging across the ring and using

elbows as well as head, hurling his greater weight on the lighter man and wrenching, twisting and butting while he jabbed low and nastily under cover.

Martin and Donovan were loudly claiming fouls. The referee snapped over his shoulder at them:

"I'm doing this! Get another man if——"

"Foul! Ah—h—h! S—s—s—s!"

The cry came from all sides with a hiss after. Sloane was doubled over as he staggered off the ropes, arms crossed on his stomach; but Kelly deliberately slugged him on the jaw—knocked him under the ropes almost off the platform. The referee helped him to his feet with the confession:

"I didn't see the foul, but I'll take your word for it. Did he foul you?"

The crowd saw his lips move. The yelling stopped. There was comparative silence—a silence charged with suspense. The Kid slowly straightened up and got his breath once—twice; then without a word he pushed off the referee and turned to face Kelly. He was still unable to put up his hands, and the first blow dropped him to the canvas. The bell clanged, and Sloane got a sustained crash of applause as he was helped to his corner.

"Are ye much hur-rt?" Donovan's Irish eyes were full of tears of rage. "Are ye in pain bad?"

"No; just weak. Give me a sniff of ammonia. He wants to finish, even if he loses on a foul, and get away," Sloane whispered. "More; now rub!"

With all his muscles relaxed he rested while he was kneaded, rubbed and twisted until his blood again rushed warm and invigorating. At the gong he leaped to mid-ring like a panther and set back Kelly's head with a long left drive.

The crowd rose to it with a wild yell—stood and yelled, and yelled; for all that had gone before was child's play to the slugging that followed. With feet wide the men stood planted, shoulders swinging from side to side as they smashed home every blow with all their weight behind it. No duck or parry now—just plain give-and-take smashes that landed square and hard. Every blow seemed good for a knockout; every yelling man in the crowd thought that yell would accompany a knock-down, and still they stood and smashed and swung, and their shoulders rocked with the lift and drive of blows that came fast and faster

until the sound of the battering gloves was like the quick volley of a striking-bag on its platform.

Kelly broke ground first, reeled back a step, came on again with a long, lifting drive that caught Sloane off balance and dropped him on his side.

He lay and panted until the referee swung down the count of eight, then got to his feet with an easy back-step, landed in a crouch and drove forward and upward with a lifting smash to the jaw that drove Kelly half across the ring and under the ropes. As the referee counted five the gong sounded and Kelly was dragged to his corner, just as he was beginning to stir his legs and roll over.



THE shrieking and roaring had stopped at the sound of the bell, and as Sloane walked to his corner he got a burst of frantic hand-clapping. The big voice upstairs boomed out in a distinct *crescendo*—

“Well—well—well—well!”

Donovan was through the ropes and had Sloane in his arms to put him in his chair. He hugged him as he cried:

“Praise Mary I lived to see it! Ye’re the —’s own broth of a fighter! Ye had him out, only he was saved by the gong.”

“No, he wasn’t out,” said Sloane, smiling into the staring face of his uncle, who was looking at him as if he saw him for the first time. “But I made him step some that round. We’re just warming up.”

In the minute intermission there was a loud buzz of talk. The Kid had proved a glorious surprise, and a few bets were made that he would last out the six rounds. On all sides one heard the same thing—if he only had twenty pounds more beef!

He was a wonder; but who would guess it at first sight of him? The pretty-girl face on him; and then see him tear into Kelly like a demon—after he had been fouled too—he was all fire and flint; a regular fighting-fool and a hog for punishment!

“Now go back and begin over,” was Martin’s advice while he directed the rubbing of the Kid’s arms and chest-muscles. “Hold him off and stab at his wind; you may get him winded yet.”

“And remember ye look out for a foul!” the Irishman contributed.

It was good advice, and for the greater part of the round Sloane followed it to the letter. Kelly bored in for more short-arm

work, but the Kid kept him off by blocking and jabbing, side-stepping out of corners and side-slipping out of clinches with easy grace and skill.

The excitement of the crowd subsided, but there was not a single shout of advice or criticism now. It was evident that the sympathy of the audience had shifted. The buzz of comment on the skill of the Kid, swelled to a shout of approval when he snapped one of his left jabs to Kelly’s heart-section, making the big fellow wince and cover up. He kept drilling at that same sore spot, and the continual battering began to tell on Kelly’s wind. His breath came with a rasp that delighted the two old ring-generals in the Kid’s corner. Suddenly there was an exchange of short-arm jabs in one corner, and the Kid was again slipping to the floor from the ropes, doubled up in agony.

“Foul! Foul! Murder! Take ‘im out!”

Half the crowd was on its feet, shouting and shaking fists.

“Lynch the referee!” bellowed the voice from the gallery.

But the noise sank and stopped, merged in a storm of clapping as the Kid pulled himself up by the ropes and staggered into a clinch. The referee took his time about forcing a break-away, giving the Kid all the time he could to get his feet under him; but as he swung out at arm’s length Kelly caught him with a long left that floored him heavily.

In a sudden hush the referee began to count with a long chop of his arm.

“Five—six!”

Sloane rolled on his face, drew up his knees, and the count of “Nine” was drowned by the yell of the mob as he heaved himself up and ducked a flailing right swing. Again he covered and clinched, and again he was dropped by a jab that did not look dangerous. He took the full nine count to get up, wavered out of reach, crouched and lashed out that wicked left to Kelly’s ribs.

The crowd was up as if worked by one released spring, let out a yell that was sustained as the Kid stood foot to foot and traded hard wallops with the big man until he was sent to the canvas at the clang of the gong. His uncle climbed up to pull at Martin’s sleeve.

“Stop it! Want to kill the boy?” he roared hoarsely above the din. “What’s the sense in it?”

Donovan was working at Sloane's body, massaging the relaxed muscles of the abdomen and chest. He squinted up at the big banker.

"Let ye mind y'r own business, sir-r!"

The burr of his brogue meant strong feeling.

"Now, lad, open y'r mouth and lean forward."

The sudden tenderness of his tone as he returned to his work stopped the banker's mouth. He saw Sloane droop forward, eyes still closed, for some final manipulations. The gong sounded; seconds slid through the ropes; Sloane was up and away with the same easy lightness that made his movements a miracle.

Kelly came out of his corner like a tiger let loose; tore in with the plain purpose to finish right now. The Kid was there, right with him at every vicious rush. The mob ecstasy rose again, and the scenes of the third round were repeated. There was an exchange of smashes in mid-ring that ended only when the Kid dropped, with Kelly gasping for wind so that he could not finish the Kid as he got up. Both men were groggy from sheer exhaustion.

Then Kelly began his foul tactics abruptly. He butted, elbowed, struck low and foul, got the Kid doubled over, then brought up his knee to the Kid's face with a savage *dunt* that stretched him senseless—apparently out for keeps.

Once more the boos and hisses, shrieks of rage and vengeance.

"Kill the cur!"

"Sneak!"

"Coward!"

"Mad dog—shoot him!"

The referee stepped between Kelly, waiting to strike, and the prostrate Kid; raised a hand high for silence. Before he could be heard the Kid had a hold on his trouser leg, pulled himself to his feet and pulled down the raised right arm as he hissed something in the referee's ear. With a helpless fling of both hands in the air the good man stepped aside, and the slaughter went on in the steady uproar. There was a move to mob the referee; fights started all over the hall; but it all stopped as the Kid made another impossible rally. When the gong sounded and Sloane came to his corner he panted with a faint smile at his uncle—

"Next round—tells the story!"

And he flopped on the chair with closed

eyes and heaving chest. The banker made another desperate effort. He leaned over the ropes to Sloane's ear and said huskily:

"Don't be a fool! You can't last; he'll kill you by fouls!"

Slowly the Kid opened his eyes and gasped jerkily:

"Listen! When the finish comes there'll be only one of us—in the ring. That'll be me—*me!*" thumping his chest twice.

He closed his eyes and relaxed.

"Gone clean crazy! Wild as a hawk—knocked foolish!"

The banker turned to the chief of detectives, Jones; but that solid individual was looking at the far end of the hall, where a stir was visible. Jones turned quickly.

"The bulls are here with the papers at last! And Kelly can be pinched any time now; the crowd won't interfere."

It was undeniable. The mass of human beings was now thirsting for Kelly's blood with a mob's usual consistency and rooting for the Kid. The banker's face turned whiter with the thrill of relief and exultation.

"Stop the fight!"

He seized upon Sloane's seconds frantically.

"Arrest Kelly and put an end to this horror! No use——"

But he was crowded and hustled off the platform. The two old fighters hustled out of the ring, taking his legs from under him in their hurry at the clang of the gong. They had not heard even a word of his shouting. Donovan helped him to his feet.

"What's it ails ye at all?" he demanded. "Watch this, or ye miss it now!"

"Go tell the officers to come down near the ring," the banker ordered Jones, "so they can nab Kelly as soon as he steps out."

He turned to tackle the two obstinate old men who were abetting the slaughter of his nephew—

"See here!" He turned Donovan toward him and thrust out at him the jaw that had terrified boards and barons. "Are you going to pull that crazy Kid out of that ring or not?"

Donovan thrust out in opposition the chin he inherited from kings of Ireland as he snapped:

"I am *not!* I'd not stop that lad now for the Presidint himself. Sit ye down and behave yourself!"

And J. M. Pierpont almost sat down.

But at that moment came Bruce the faithful with a message of import; and, not being able to get at Sloane just then, he told his news to the banker.

"The bulls have come, but there's some kind of dirty work going on in that locked dressing-room!"

He hissed it into Pierpont's ear.

"I can't see, but I think they're taking the girl out of there."

"Climb up to the ropes and yell it to the Kid!" barked the exasperated magnate. "He's clean crazy—like a bulldog; can't stop fighting."

And he turned his anxious eyes again to the torment of watching the Kid beaten insensible.

Meanwhile the fight was swinging from side to side as one man, then the other, rallied and rushed. At the bell the men had landed in the center of the ring, slugging. Both seemed renewed in strength, and they walloped wild and wickedly. The Kid especially seemed a demon refreshed and let loose a whirlwind of power as impossible as it was electrifying.

Once again the mob upreared on its hind legs, stirred to its beast-bottom by the sheer fight-fury and blood-hunger that glittered in the Kid's eyes and drove him to this miracle. He came fast and harder—drove the big man across the ring to the ropes—rocked his head from side to side with right and left swings and drives. Men jumped on chairs and screeched, jammed hats and battered each other in an ecstasy of delirious sympathy.

With a sudden shift of tactics the Kid sent two final drives to the heart that dropped Kelly to the canvas. He lay gasping to the count of ten but got to his feet with a stagger to clinch under the Kid's arms. Here he hung until torn off by the referee; but in the break-away he landed a foul swing with all his returning strength. The Kid dropped, and Kelly got back his wind.

From that instant it was just a question of which could muster strength for a finishing punch. Both were groggy and winded; but Kelly's breath seemed to tear his throat, and his neck-muscles stood out with the effort. The big man, however, was throwing his weight on the Kid at every clinch, grinding him down and wearing him out. When Kelly landed a full-arm blow the Kid went

to the floor, and each time he took the full count of nine to rest and breathe.

He was fighting according to plan, but he had not counted on the effects of the manhandling of the night before and the long day of strain. His stamina was gone; his muscles were numb and dead; he couldn't punch! Again he let himself go as he was knocked under the ropes to the edge of the platform.

"Dirty work, doc! In Kelly's room! The girl!"

Sloane opened his eyes to see Bruce's face close to his own. He rolled back into the ring where Kelly crouched waiting. Kelly bent low over him; gasped:

"I got her, — — — you! You — — —!"

The same foul name that had shocked Sloane into striking Kirby in the office.

Sloane jerked as if stabbed. Rage shot through every nerve like a pain, and he felt his muscles spring taut. But with sudden craft he feigned collapse. He wavered on hands and knees, head swinging low and stupidly.

At the count of "Nine!" he rose on sagging knees, dropped swiftly to a squatting posture, right hand on the floor behind him. Kelly's savage swing sliced the air above him; then Sloane sprang!

With a push from the floor and a leap he shot up—all of him—in a driving, lifting smash at Kelly's open chin. His deadly left landed with a gorgeous crunch! Head knocked back, Kelly left the floor and soared. Over the ropes he went, turning slowly in the air, crashed upon the press table and flopped from there to the floor while the boiling-mad crowd jumped and shrieked. Sloane stood in the ring alone with the referee, who held up Sloane's right hand. No count needed.

Sloane saw nothing of the wild, roaring crowd; he stared fixedly at the spot where Kelly was being dragged up, "still too dead to skin," as one reporter put it; then he saw Bruce wildly gesticulating—waving him toward Kelly's dressing-room.

Swiftly darting between dancing men who grabbed in vain, across the ring to Kelly's corner, Sloane caught up Kelly's dark-green robe. He swung into it as he leaped from the platform with a vague idea he might pass for Kelly, himself, for Kelly's room was guarded. He landed in a mob that was clawing and pulling at him in a delirious

attempt to carry him on its shoulders—dragging him all ways at once.

He saw there was no use in resistance, let them pick him up and with voice and gestures strove frantically to make them understand what he wanted to do. He pointed at the door of the dressing-room, shouting:

"Dirty work in that room! Help me—come on! Come on!"

He couldn't be heard ten feet away; but his motions carried, and the mass got in motion, accelerated by his wilder efforts; bore him roaring toward the door with gathering speed.

They struck that portal with a force that tore it from its hinges at the first impact and shot Sloane to his feet inside the lighted room. Nothing there! He had expected to see Barbara struggling with a man—perhaps black Matt—and Kelly's clothes and traveling-bag containing the loot, all ready for a quick get-away; but the place was empty. Even the fighter's clothing had been taken away. There was a square hole sawed in the floor, and the top of a ladder was just being withdrawn through it from below.

XI

 SLOANE had got back his breath now, and his head was clear. He had not been so badly punished as he had seemed at any time. He ran to the sawed opening, could see nothing in the darkness below and turned to his two seconds, Donovan and Martin, who had followed and been swept along with him.

"Kelly will get away by the side doors. Where are the officers with the papers?"

Even as he asked his question was answered.

"No, you don't!" said a big bluecoat, elbowing his way out of the jam at the door. "You're the man, and you'll go with us. No rough stuff now!"

"You leather-head!" Sloane snapped at him. "Kelly is getting away from you right now!"

While the big officer wavered in perplexity the great banker elbowed forward.

"See here, officer! This is my nephew. He has just licked Kelly. That's your man now; half-way to the side entrance."

He pointed through the door.

"They told me the one with the green nightgown," the bluecoat muttered sullenly.

"I just got here. Hey, you! Turn around; it's the other one!"

He shouted to the two other cops who were still working through the crowd and started to cleave his way after them. The mob helped him with shoves and sarcastic advice.

"Now Kelly will get away by that fool's mistake." Sloane was almost hysterical with rage and disappointment. "After I battered that brute——"

"This way, doc!"

Little Bruce appeared under Sloane's nose. "There's a back stair, and we can run around and head him off. Doc Parsons here has got your clothes; come on! Gangway for the Texas Kid, gentlemen! Gangway!"

Parson's red head glowed above the packed mass close at hand. The crowd gave aid. Sloane was fairly thrust into trousers, vest and coat as he was passed through the jam round the corner of the dressing-room toward the rear exit, followed closely in the diminishing press by Bruce and his uncle.

Down the narrow stairs and into a dark alley they stumbled and scrambled, gaining in speed as the press diminished. Bruce called out from the dark:

"This way! Cars this side!"

A heavy fog had settled like a blanket.

And as they came to the alley-mouth they faced a vacant lot filled with waiting cars and carriages. Horses danced in the smoky darkness; drivers swore and engines spit and roared as the mixed vehicles got under way.

Racing toward the front, they could see by the light streaming from a side exit a big touring-car with top down and a heavy man helping Kelly into it. Sloane thought he could make out a veiled and muffled figure in the rear seat. Kelly and the fat man sat beside it, and the car crashed gears noisily.

"That's Kelly and the Professor!" Bruce called hoarsely. "The old —— —!"

"Here's my car!" the banker shouted at the same time. "George! Hi—George!"

As they piled into the tonneau of the imported car Pierpont answered Bruce's wistful look.

"Yes—get in! You too, Parsons. We'll get that oily hypocrite and the other crook now if we chase 'em to Halifax. He's a sweet one, that Hasbrouck! I told Wise he was making a fool of himself. Bust the old boat if you have to, George!"

The chauffeur chewed gum cheerfully.

"Good car they got; but we got the legs

of 'em if they don't slip us in the fog," quoth he as he yanked levers. "It's thicker on the riverfront."

Other drivers swore and tore at their wheels as George shaved mud-guards and clicked hubs with them. He slipped through half-size holes and dodged charging cars, cut under the very pawing hoofs of rearing horses and jumped from the curb to a chorus of swearing pedestrians. As he swung out and trod on the juice he still had the fleeing car in sight.

"Headin' for the Penn. line!" he commented gruffly. "Thought he'd go the other way—to the waterfront."

The banker leaned forward and added:

"I had a fast steam-launch at a slip near the ferry; heard he had a tug all ready to put him on a fruit steamer. But we got him now in spite of your slick poisoner Hasbrouck! He fooled us all—fat hypocrite!"

This was shouted in Sloane's ear; but George at his side was looking anxiously at his dials.

"Mixture ain't right, and she's foul with carbon," he muttered. "She don't get out from under the way she'd ought to. That boat they got sure can go down the road! Come, old girl; let's see what they got!"

By now the traffic had thinned so that it was possible to let out the speed notch by notch. Still the car ahead held its lead or even bettered it a bit. The road-bed was none too good. They bounced and rocked, skidded on the turns with set brakes and tore down the straight stretches with throttle wide.

"Tryin' to shake us," George commented as he jammed brakes and skidded on another right-angled turn. "Betcha he heads back—Hoboken maybe—but he don't lose us yet. Sure can paw dirt on a straight-away though. 'F he knew how to skid corners he'd lose us at that."

"Can't you do it?"

The banker leaned forward again, hanging to the seat-back.

"Is he too fast for us? How much gas have we got?"

"Do' know!"

George answered all three questions at once.

And even as he answered the car ahead slowed for another turn. In the light of a street-lamp and a thin spot of fog Sloane could see that one of the three figures in the

rear seat was a woman's figure. Also he could see the broader of the other two—Hasbrouck clearly—twisting about to kneel in the seat. Then the car rocked round the corner and headed for the waterfront. George took the turn on the slide as usual.

Straightened out again with a long open stretch leading into the fog, George called on his car for all the speed she had. Sloane gripped the seat arms and stared rigidly. Would the car ahead leave them?

For a long minute they seemed to hold their distance; then George let out a yelp of triumph:

"We got 'em! Look out!"

Then, crouching over his wheel—

"Duck!"

A flash came from the high back of the car ahead. Fine glass sprayed his face, and a rayed hole appeared in the wind-shield near the top. Sloane was dumb for an instant at the astounding fact—the Professor shooting! But this was not the obsequious prisoner who fainted at the sight of blood; it was Hasbrouck, the clear-headed, cold-hearted killer at bay.

Sloane turned to call over his shoulder:

"Got a gun, anybody? Keep your heads down!"

"Here you are—a good one!"

Parsons passed the butt of a Colt over Sloane's shoulder with the caution:

"Girl on the right, remember. Better plug a tire!"

"What else?" muttered Sloane. "Can't you go any faster?"

The last was to George, who still had his foot hard down on the gas as he answered:

"Best I can do. Puncture 'em!"

George bobbed down again.

"Duck!"

Again a shot from Hasbrouck's gun punched a hole in the wind-shield over the head of George, who remarked critically—

"Pretty good shootin' from a car; but you got to do better."

"I know it." Sloane stood up. "If this were only a horse now——"

With the word he fired—once; no result—twice—a third time; and with a loud bang and whistle the left rear tire flattened out.

The car ahead swerved, sheared off a fender on a tree and staggered back into the road again, with the gap between the two rapidly closing up.

"You got him!" yelled Parsons from the tonneau.

"Duck again—quick!"

They were so close to them now that Sloane could see Hasbrouck's face—even fancied he could see on it the thick-lipped smile, that hurt, half-embarrassed smile—as he aimed with deliberation. Sloane, crouching behind the cowl, saw that Hasbrouck was aiming at the driver—saw him depress the gun and fire at the left wheel instead; then he was flung under the cowl as the car swung aside and crashed into a post.

When he picked himself up they were still going, but lurching and grinding heavily.

"Bent or—bust something!" George snarled as he jerked the wheel back and forth. "There's the—dock!"

The car in front was still in sight, while on their right piles of lumber loomed out of the fog, gliding past and showing between them glimpses of water, still and smoking with misty vapor.

"Hold up! They're stopping. *Whoa!*" Parsons roared from the rear.



THINGS happened all at once. Sloane saw the car in front slow down; saw Hasbrouck aiming, this time at George the driver. He fired. George's head dropped on his arm; the wheel spun; a splintering crash against a lumber-pile that seemed to be toppling over on the car!

He picked himself up from between the car, which lay almost bottom up, and the pile of lumber. His uncle was already afoot and calling to some one underneath:

"Are you caught? Are you hurt? Answer!"

"All right; but we can't get out!" came Bruce's hoarse voice, unhurried and cool. "Where's doc?"

"Here!" Sloane called. "We'll have you out in a——"

"Don't do it, doc!" came Bruce's shouted interruption. "Go jump that bunch before they get away clean! Go now!"

"Do it! Go on!" His uncle swung his arm excitedly. "I'll be after you in the *Vamoose*. Tell 'em if they touch you I'll follow 'em to Halifax!"

Sloane was off, dodging between the piles of lumber. Reaching the edge of the pier, he could make out the outlines of a small tug alongside the second pile of lumber beyond him. He could see smoke pouring from its funnel in a black smudge; but not a light was showing. He had just sighted it when he heard the low order.

"All right. Cast off the stern-line."

Came a muffled clang of a bell. He darted back between the lumber-piles, passed around two and came to the string-piece on the reckless run. Without pause he leaped.

With the gentle puffs peculiar to tugs the boat was just gathering headway. The only light was the faint gleam from the binnacle. With that as his sole guide Sloane took a running jump across the widening strip of water. He aimed for the narrow strip of deck on the port bow and was lucky. He landed inside the low rail, fell forward on hands and knees and held his breath.

He still wore the rubber bottoms in which he had left the ring, so the only noise he made in landing was the *clop!* of his Colt on the deck as he came down on his hands. He relaxed for a few breaths of wet air.

The only man on his side of the boat was pulling in the line astern, and he kept quietly at his job. All was right so far. But when the man had finished coiling his rope he would be coming forward and would see him. In spite of this imminent danger the sudden relaxation from strain left him almost helpless. His weary muscles dragged him down, begging him to shut his eyes and let go.

The abrupt hoot of the whistle, so loud and so near that it shook his chest, roused him to painful effort. The first move was the hardest—a big breath and he was himself again. The man had his rope coiled now. Sloane felt along the wall of the deck-house, found a small door, softly opened it a crack and peered in—and down.

Below was the fireroom, dim and sooty, a short ladder leading down, a sooty giant shoveling coal into the roaring maw of the fire.

Which was better? A row on deck or one down there in the fireroom? He decided for the fireroom because he might hold up the stoker and impose his own terms without being heard above. Choosing a moment when the stoker was bent over and wielding his shovel, he slipped through the door and closed it behind him.

Standing on the top rung of the short ladder, he waited for the giant to look up. He was bare to the waist, this giant. His body, grimed and sweat-streaked, was a model for a Laöccoön. His roaring pet satisfied for the moment, he stood leaning on his shovel, a picture that Sloane enjoyed for a time. Then he roused himself.

"Well," he said, gently waving his Colt before him, "how about it, neighbor?"

Looking up without change of posture, the man smiled, white teeth flashing in contrast to his blackened face. His voice was low and booming.

"Hello, Sloane! How did you get here?"

"Condon!"

Sloane flashed his quick smile in response, then sobered as quickly.

"I chased those crooks, Kelly and Hasbrouck. They don't know I'm here yet, or you either, I expect. What's your game? Did you know the Professor was your man all along?"

Coming down a step with each wary question, Sloane was facing the big Briton at the bottom as he finished. But he kept the gun between them, for he felt that this meeting was not all good luck for him. Condon replied with slow precision—

"I didn't know Hasbrouck was the forger I was after until it was too late to make out papers, so I bought off the navvy on this boat at the last minute.

"But what next?" Sloane persisted. "When they go aboard the steamer—I think that's their plan—how will you follow or stop them?"

Condon grinned.

"I shall go along; I know a way. When the steamer touches at Kingston I can take my man under the British flag. I have no use for this Kelly."

"I thought so."

Sloane's face got hard as he went on evenly:

"Now we can't fight each other, or we shall both lose out. I am going to stop Shad Kelly; take that from me! No. Stand still! Those crooks will not reach that steamer if I have to disable every man aboard to stop it. You see the point?"

"I see what you want." Condon was cool and wary as he stated the case:

"But they are five to your one, and I can't help you against such odds. I have undergone too much to lose out now; and you have no warrant for Hasbrouck. He will get away if he gets ashore in New York. Your officers and detectives are easy for him." Condon shook his head ponderously. "You can hold me up or shoot me; but you will bring them down on you, four of them, all armed. You will be shot like a rat in a pit!"

Sloane saw there was no use in trying to

argue, to prove that Hasbrouck could be held in New York. Condon was set on taking his man at Kingston and would not listen to any other plan. There was just one possible way out.

"See here! Do you know who it was they brought aboard all wrapped up?"

Condon shook his head slowly.

"It wouldn't make any difference."

"It's the girl they called the Queen of Charity on the island. I— She is *the* girl. Understand?"

It sounded weak to Sloane himself after the hard facts they had been dealing in; but the big fellow did not speak for a full half-minute. When he did speak it was after a long breath.

"Very well! That is another matter. What do you propose?"

"Condon—" Sloane's voice had a shake in it—"you are a gentleman and a scholar and a good judge of music. Shake!"

He held out his hand.

Condon's large, fine features lighted with a slight, wistful smile as he said:

"You Americans do a lot of hand-shaking. But I don't see where the music comes in—how it helps any to be a judge of it, what I mean. What?"

"Just a backwoods expression I used to hear as a boy."

Sloane grinned and gripped the big hand.

"It means you're all right. Did you bring a gun—a revolver? In those clothes hanging there? May I see it?"

He had the gun out in a hurry while he asked permission. With it were a few extra shells which he put back.

"Won't fit my gun, but I have three shots left," he announced. "You take yours. How much time have we?"

Condon blinked as he asked:

"Before they expect to be picked up, you mean? I heard the skipper say it might be daylight. The fog——"

"All right," Sloane interrupted. "I look at it like this: if we wait we may get caught at it. Now there's a bare chance we may have help. There's a fast boat looking for us—my uncle's—and the farther we go the less chance they will find us in the fog. Our play is to hold up this tug right now and run around in a circle, tooting for help. Well?"

"Two of us?" Condon's face was blank. "I don't know the controls, and the fire will go down if——"

"Listen!"

Sloane tapped the broad chest with a stiff finger as he explained:

"We get the deck-hand and the engineer tied up. You hold a gun on the skipper in the wheel-house and make him run the tug round like a dog chasing his tail while I hold up the two crooks in the cabin. See?"

He seemed to speed up Condon's brain-action by sheer force of determination. The big man almost smiled.

"She'd run half an hour on one firing with the engine set at full ahead," he admitted. "If they don't hear us in the cabin and come——"

"No time for ifs!" Sloane did not allow him to finish any sentence. "That's what gums any game—bad as a lumber-pile! Now then——"

He paused, looking about the dim little hole with flashing eyes. Condon was rumbling:

"I say! Lumber-pile— What——" when Sloane galvanized him again:

"You got to play sick!"

He used the arresting finger with another prod:

"Fill up the fire. Throw those burlap sacks over me. Call the deck-hand and tell him you're faint; you want water. When he comes with it you will be stretched out on the floor here; get me? He will bend over you, and I get him! Then we both stick up the engineer. Plenty of rope on deck. Get busy!"

Condon plied his shovel. When the fire filled up—and Sloane was hidden on the coal—Condon went to the ladder and called through the narrow door. The deck-hand came and went, grumbling, taking the tin pail Condon had handed up. Returning, he held the filled pail through the door with the growl:

"Here, you! Come git it!"

But Condon lay on his face in the dim glow from the fire-box. The man came down the ladder cursing, roughly pulled Condon over on his back and dropped across him as Sloane rapped his head smartly with his gun-butt. Condon got up with the quiet remark:

"There's a spare line hanging under that coat. That worked all right, but we can't call the engineer down here."

Sloane was roping his victim expertly, and did not answer until he had him gagged and stowed in the coal. Then he stood up

and took a drink from the pail, which had dropped right side up.

"Easy!" he said. "You rap on that slide when I am all set up above. Give me time to get up on deck to the engine-room door, and he will stick his nose through that hole. I am behind him; see? Take that long iron thing."

And he was up the ladder like a cat. Waiting until Sloane had time to make a circuit of the deck, Condon took the long iron rake and battered heavily on the engineer's slide. It was thrown back at once. Condon had started to ask some question about the fire when the dark face at the peep-hole disappeared. Sloane's big, flashing eyes took its place.

"Come on! I got him! Bring your gun!"

Together they bound and carried the engineer down to keep the deck-hand silent company in the fireroom.

"The skipper will be easy," Sloane said as Condon came on deck. "Did you get their guns—both of them?"

There was no sound from the cabin.

"Yes. And some shells."

Condon spoke in a whisper.

When Sloane had refilled his own gun he handed Condon the others. Careful not to make any noise, Sloane took him to the engineroom to give further orders.

Condon entered first. He stepped from the deck into the light of the engineroom at the exact moment when the captain looked down through an opening from the wheel-house. His last signal to slow down had not been answered, and he had turned to discover the reason.

He saw the coal-blackened stoker in the place of the engineer and shouted:

"Where's Joe? What you up there for?"

Condon saw the skipper did not suspect he was boarded and answered—

"I think the engineer is sick, sir!"

At the same time his hand stole to his hip. The captain reached for his own gun, but Sloane's hand was there first. Sloane had leaped for the wheel-house stairs at the sound of the skipper's voice, seized his wrist as it came back for the gun, and there was a brisk scuffle in the pilot-house.

The captain was burly but slow-witted, and he fought in silence. Hurling his weight back with a foot against the wall, he jammed Sloane against the wheel so savagely that Sloane's gun-arm was caught and

made useless for the time by the pain and numbness.

Sloane ducked a vicious swing at his face, let go his hold on the captain's wrist and swung free. Then as the captain reached for his revolver once more Sloane snapped his deadly left upper-cut to the chin, and it was all over. His man dropped on his face.

"Well done!" came Condon's booming mutter over his shoulder. "But the boat is running wild, and I don't know where we are."

"He's coming to."

Sloane was shaking the unconscious man. "I thought of that, and didn't hit too hard. Put all the guns out of his reach and hold two of 'em to his back when I get him stood up. Wake up, neighbor! That's business. On your feet and grab those handles! There! Easy now! None o' that rough stuff; there's a gun under each shoulder-blade; may go off any minute! So—let 'er run round and round and round. All right, Condon?"

With the dazed master of the craft sensibly obeying the orders of the big, blackened Condon, Sloane departed noiselessly and went down to the deserted deck.

Standing under the one small window of the cabin, he could hear the murmur of voices inside. The tug's lights made only a small blur of brightness in the grayish mass of the fog. Even the white wake from the stern rolled back into the dimness only a few yards before it was cut off as by a blanket. Hoots of whistles more or less remote only made the dark more lonely. The tug might be in mid-Atlantic, for any sign of life or land. But in the cabin at his back were Hasbrouck and Kelly.

The thought of them, in there with Barbara, roused him from the apathy of fatigue that had threatened to benumb him. After hours of prolonged strain he had to fight off a heaviness like a great weight on his shoulders. The little window was opaque with a mist, inside as well as out, and he could see nothing.

He crept to the door, slowly twisting at the knob that it might not make a noise, and listened.

The murmur inside was broken by Hasbrouck's distinct speech:

"That's as fair as you can make it. How can you beat it?"

In the silence that followed, the knob in

his hand yielded with a sharp click! He held it still—held his breath—

A sudden jerk inward before he could loose his hold pulled his head inside; a blinding flash, and he sank into blackness.



WHEN he drew his first conscious breath—conscious at first of a headache—he heard Hasbrouck saying:

"The other one is the Scotland Yard dick who is after me for forgery. He's holding a gun on the captain now, and I couldn't get one without the other. Nobody at the engine or in the fireroom. We're running in a circle, waiting for help probably. Hark!"

Here the tug whistle lifted up its voice in a long toot, twice repeated. Sloane's eyes had cleared, and he was taking in the cabin interior, small and bare, with iron-arm settees on each side bolted to the wall. He lay, tied hand and foot, on the floor in front of one settee, and the rope round his wrists was passed through the iron bracket.

He could not roll over, but he turned his head far enough to see that Barbara was seated just behind him. At first he thought she was free; but by twisting farther he saw she was tied to her seat-arms. Her hands were free, however, and a cloak had been thrown back, leaving her head uncovered. Her eyes were flashing and she breathed as if she had been tied only after a struggle. She met his glance and turned pale with a look of pleading as she leaned forward. Then she bit her lip and turned away.

"We got to stop this," Kelly suddenly broke out at Hasbrouck. "Why don't you do something? Want to get pinched and carried back? Are you in this?"

"Who are you talking to, Kelly?" Hasbrouck asked coldly; and his thick lips wore his peculiar, half-embarrassed smile.

Kelly drew back and muttered:

"Well, we got to do something besides chew the rag. I say we drop this pretty pup overboard and get the big stiff in the wheel-house."

"You always were a fool, Kelly," said the fat man easily. "If I'd known it sooner I'd have let you go your own way to the chair in Sing Sing. You seem bound to get there anyhow. Go see if the engineer and deck-hand are below tied up anywhere. I may get you out of this yet."

Kelly had his mouth open for a snarling protest, but he closed it and went out. Hasbrouck peered out after him, then turned

to Sloane and Barbara. His face still wore the hurt, half-shamed smile Sloane had seen so often as he said:

"I didn't know you cared so much, girl. I haven't seen you but three times, and you never saw Dr. Sloane until last week. I thought you were stringing him. Why didn't you tell me he was the man?"

Barbara turned away from him with choking disgust:

"Don't lie to me any more. You lied to me about Dr. Sloane. You have made me a thief. I can't ever——"

She could get no further.

The fat man's smile showed he was cut deep as he explained glibly:

"I did lie about that and about Sloane, but I swear there's nothing against you in the Train case. You will never be even summoned to appear."

"A lot of good that will do now," she flashed out. "Now I am here you'd better have killed me outright. I would have fought until you had to—I will now; I won't ever go aboard the steamer unless you give Dr. Sloane what belongs to him and his friend and let him go!"

She spoke with rapid vehemence that seemed to stun Hasbrouck.

"So?"

His heavy brows flew up, and his eyes became round.

"The ——! This is a muddle. Kelly is wild over you, and he won't let you go without a fight. I was a fool to throw away my little squirt-gun!"

Both Sloane and the girl felt a thrill of hope as they saw him sit with a blank face, absorbed in thought. He spoke with child-like simplicity presently.

"I had sworn off on that posion stuff and threw the squirt-gun overboard to prove it to myself; a fine gesture—*beau geste*, as the French say. Now the —— of it is that Kelly has got one cyanogen capsule left in his pocket—enough to kill the lot of us in this little hole. He's coming!"

Kelly entered exultant. He had freed the two prisoners.

"They're both all right and on the job," he announced, "but the big stiff has got their guns up there. I tell you we got to throw the pair of 'em overboard. We can get that guy in the wheel-house now, and then we are just where we started."

"And just as far as you will get." Barbara surprized them all by speaking up

incisively. "I shall tell the captain of the fruit-steamer you're a murderer, and he will never take you, or he will put you in irons."

Kelly looked at her with a snarl.

"So you have come to life! Where do you get that? Didn't you hear Dr. Hasbrouck say you were sick—out of your head—and that he was taking his dear daughter a trip for her health? Holler your head off; it won't register."

"Change in the program, Kelly!"

Hasbrouck spoke up with such careless and crisp authority that Sloane had to admire the nerve of the man.

"It seems that you are not the man after all. Miss Welland prefers the doctor here, and we have got to fix things accordingly."

"What's that?" Kelly snapped. "Going to double-cross me? Don't crowd me, man; don't crowd me!"

And his nostrils flared white and thin.

"You don't scare anybody, Kelly."

Hasbrouck's peculiar, scared smile meant nothing, and Kelly sensed that fact as the fat man went on:

"I am not going to back up your insanity play unless you fix things right. You have lost your common sense with your moral sense. It's the only way to avoid trouble later. Use your brains, and don't talk about crowding!"

"See here, girl!"

Kelly turned to Barbara.

"You don't want that little dude. You can't have any use for the pink-faced ——! He's yellow—a sneak—and I could tell you something that would make you sick."

"You know you're lying now."

She brought the blood to his face by her contempt.

"I knew you were lying before. But if you will give back what belongs to Dr. Sloane and his friend and let him go I will promise to make no trouble aboard ship."

"No!"

Sloane let it out through clenched teeth, and from where he lay he turned on Kelly a face and look the latter could not meet.

"You dirty, whipped cur! And I'll do it again——"

"Here! Quit this!"

Hasbrouck stepped in before Kelly could kick the prostrate man in the face.

"Kelly, I made a mistake when I paired you two—you and Barbara. Physically you made a good couple—good for the race; but I hadn't seen Sloane here. He has

whipped you fairly and won the girl by the old law as well as by her choice. Now—now! Stand back!”

Hasbrouck slipped his fingers in his empty waistcoat-pocket, and Kelly recoiled, bluffed. The wily fat man went on blandly:

“You can’t take her aboard unless I back up your story, so I hold the cards. But she has made——”

Here Kelly broke out brutally:

“—— her! I’ll kill her before I’ll let him have her! I’ll croak you all!”

“You’re crazy. Wait!”

Hasbrouck put out an arm to check the fighter’s advance.

“She says she will go with you if you will let Sloane go with his property. You’ll have enough; be sensible!”

Kelly suddenly checked himself, and his eyes narrowed slyly as he asked—

“What’ll we do with him while we go aboard the tramp?”

“Put him in the coal-hole with Condon,” Hasbrouck answered slowly, suspicious of Kelly’s abrupt change of face.

Sloane could hear his heart thump as he waited for Kelly’s decision. Kelly shrugged his shoulders.

“All right. Give me your gun for the engineer. We got to hold up that British—— in the wheel-house and stop the boat running in circles. It will take two of us. He’s got all the other guns and shells up there with him.”

“Where’s Sloane’s gun? You took it.”

Hasbrouck felt for his own as he spoke. Kelly lied promptly:

“Threw it overboard; no shells in it. I only want yours for a minute.”

“But suppose the doctor here gets loose,” Hasbrouck objected. “I’ll need——”

“You can take this life-preserver.” Kelly snatched the gun from the fat man’s hand and threw him the little loaded leather club with a leer of triumph. “Here!”

The life-preserver fell at Hasbrouck’s feet, and Kelly was gone with a backward look of malicious promise.

Sloane had been watching Barbara’s face as it showed her tremulous hope in the outcome of the parley. He saw it now flash alight with new courage and gratitude as she whispered to Hasbrouck:

“I knew you couldn’t be all bad! You will help me? And see that — he — Dr. Sloane—is not hurt? I know you will!”

Hasbrouck shook his head, and his lips

curled in the old smile that had now a twist of self-contempt as he said:

“Overreached! And by that numskull! I ought to have put him away with Kirby. Another mistake. I don’t make ’em often, but when I do I do the job right!”

“What is it?” Barbara caught at the fat man’s sleeve. “Tell me!”

“He will clean up all three of us.”

Hasbrouck said it with a weary sigh of careless resignation and dropped on the settee beside Barbara with his chin on his chest. In that position while she looked at him with wide, unbelieving eyes he went on with a clear-cut soliloquy:

“I believe in presentiments. Always before I could see several days ahead—imagine what I would be doing; but today it stopped short! I can’t see out of this fog; it all stops right here on this tug. ——! What a finish!”

“Well, are you going to let Kelly kill us, helpless and hog-tied like this, as your last act on earth?” Sloane asked incisively.



HASBROUCK sat up and looked down at him with that slow, thick-lipped smile, at once sensitive and superbly careless of human life. He said:

“The last act has no more weight than the others. It’s the first step that damns. And tied or loose, what’s the odds?”

His eyes looked far away as he murmured still distinctly:

“I could enjoy life now; just ready for it. I had quit killing even crooks, and stealing because it did not pay. If you have a soul or even a normal body, sooner or later you pay. See if you can figure that out, Sloane. What’s that? Listen!”

A shot outside. The whistle overhead had been hooting at intervals unnoticed, but now it was answered somewhere astern. Again it sounded, and two blasts came in answer, this time nearer and almost abeam. Two more shots on the deck, one on each side of the cabin. Again the whistle sounded and was answered. A sharp report came out of the fog from the same direction—a rifle-crack.

“There they are!” Sloane called up from the floor. “That’s our boat. Cut us loose and I’ll do what I can for you.”

Kelly crashed through the door into the cabin, gun in hand, his face streaked with blood from a scratch on his forehead.

“—— the luck!” he panted. “It’s a

racing steam-yacht with bulls aboard. They can run circles round us; and they got a rifle. Let 'em try to board us, — — — 'em!"

He cursed to keep up his courage.

"That is my uncle's boat," Sloane told him. "If you know what's good for you, cut me loose and I'll speak a word for you."

"I will like —!" Kelly shouted. "I'll tell 'em I'll croak you all—all four of you—if they come any closer! And we'll fight 'em off as long as we got a shell left. You be saying your prayers!"

He dashed out suddenly.

"The poor fool hadn't thought of that until you put it in his head," Hasbrouck said in wonder. "It hadn't occurred to him that he had hostages. Now our only hope is that your uncle will offer terms. He has brains anyway. What a finish—to be beaten by a fool!"

He spoke musingly, the coolest of them all, and he was opening a penknife as he spoke. Sloane held his breath, but Hasbrouck only sighed—

"If I only had my little squirt!"

As he bent over Barbara she shrank from him, and he smiled—the hurt smile:

"Only the cords, my dear. There you are!"

He cut her loose and then Sloane. And, as he tried to get up on feet like stumps of wood, Sloane would have fallen if Hasbrouck had not helped him on to the settee. He sat rubbing his wrists, with fumbling hands that did not belong to him at all, trying to bring back some feeling and control. Meanwhile the shots outside had become a running fusilade, answered from the fog at slowly decreasing distance. Hasbrouck listened, standing absently alone in the middle of the floor.

"Kelly must have got Condon—or the shells at least," he commented.

Suddenly he stepped to the door and shook it. Kelly had locked it outside. Hasbrouck faced about, still wearing the baffled, half-embarrassed smirk.

"Rather an anti-climax—to be shot in a hole like a lot of rats," he said to Sloane. "And not a weapon but this!"

He held up the life-preserver. "Listen! He's telling them——"

Outside Kelly was shouting hoarsely:

"Keep off! Go back or I shoot them all! I got 'em tied up, and I won't be taken alive! Turn back!"

The shots from the other boat stopped abruptly.

Sloane jumped up, snatching the little club from Hasbrouck's hand. Stumbling on numb feet to the window, he smashed the glass and put his face to the opening.

"Come on!" he shouted with a roar of surprising volume. "We are all right! Come——"

He was snatched away from the broken window just in time. Kelly had fired within a foot of the window, and Hasbrouck had pulled Sloane's head down none too soon. The flash came through the broken glass, and the bullet tore the ceiling of the little cabin. The fat man's face did not alter a line as he said—

"Put that down on the credit side."

And he added in a lower tone:

"If you get a chance. We are on the last lap now."

The firing from the pursuing boat had started up; was coming closer. The door burst open, and Kelly staggered into the middle of the cabin. Reeling back, he closed and locked the door, then flung the key through the broken window before he faced about.

He was an inhuman object. His blood-streaked face was fixed in a wide snarl that showed all his teeth—some white, some dark with blood that ran down over his stretched lips and dripped from his jaws. His chest heaved in great, sobbing breaths that rumbled and gurgled in his torn lungs and brought a light-red froth foaming through his set teeth. He held a gun—Sloane's gun—in one hand, and his eyes glittered with maniacal cunning and bloodlust.

"They got rifles. I'm punctured!" he rasped and bloody froth flew from his lips. "But I got a shot apiece for all three o' you! — — — you! You go to — — — first!"

And he fired at Sloane point blank.

Sloane had tried to spring, but his numb feet tripped. He saw a great light, felt a paralysing shock all over his body and fell to the floor with the blood flowing warm and fast over his face. He could not even raise his head, but he was conscious that Barbara lifted it, held it in her arms and pressed her hand over the bleeding wound in his head.

His eyes never left the insane face of Kelly. Clearly he saw and heard all that followed, while he could not even move his lips. In a supreme nightmare of horror he saw Kelly turning the gun on Barbara.

She was tenderly wiping the blood from

his lips, softly murmuring to him to speak to her, and she never looked up! He could not warn her! Would it never end?

He saw Kelly's hand clench on the gun, his finger curl tighter on the trigger; then the huge bulk of the Professor stepped between. He thought of Hasbrouck as the Professor, timid and harmless now; but there he was, taking the bullet in his own thick chest as he reached for the gun.

Hasbrouck held fast to Kelly's wrist, but before he could deflect the gun Kelly fired again point blank into the fat body. Hasbrouck sagged slowly, toppled to the floor, still hanging to Kelly's hand and gun. Kelly was dragged to his knees; tried in vain to free himself. Now he, too, was failing fast from loss of blood.

Still Kelly spat and cursed, chewing his awful words through a bright, bloody froth:

"—— you! I get you—you ——!"

With his free hand he fumbled in his vest pocket, brought forth a small glass oblong—the capsule of Lightning Death that Hasbrouck had said would kill them all. Already Kelly had started the downward movement of his hand that would crush the deadly thing on the floor when Hasbrouck saw it, let go of the gun-hand and seized the one with the lethal capsule, held it in both his own and swung his weight on it.

It was the final struggle of two dying men. Sloane was still helpless, still speechless from shock, still unable to warn Barbara or to tell her to help Hasbrouck save them all. He could only look from her to the wavering, straining hands and back, while she *would* not take her eyes from his face. She whispered:

"Won't you speak to me? My love—try!"

Tense with the agony of suspense, Sloane saw the hand holding the capsule go down—stop—waver—drop again; and then it relaxed abruptly. Hasbrouck caught it with his last feeble effort, then both his hands and Kelly's fell open limp and loose. The shining little bubble rolled harmlessly on the floor.

At the same time Hasbrouck's head dropped sidewise and lay pillowed on Kelly's body while the fighter heaved one long, bubbling breath and lay still. The bright-pink froth from his lips was washed away by a dark flood of crimson.

Barbara was safe! With the relaxation

and glow of relief, with the cessation of cramped effort, Sloane felt his body alive once more. He turned his head and spoke.

"I am all right, sweetheart. Help Hasbrouck," with his quick smile.

The girl's face flashed alight. She put both hands to her face as if blinded, and through them sobbed just once—

"Oh, thank God!"

She allowed him to take away both her hands and to kiss them reverently before she insisted on tying up his plowed scalp-wound.

After he had thrown the poison-capsule through the broken window Sloane raised Hasbrouck's head, and he seemed to breathe better. His thick lips, grayish-white now, curled in the old hurt, self-conscious smile as he whispered:

"Thanks! Even a coward—a fat coward—can stop a—stop a bullet. I owed it to you, doctor. You treated me like a gentleman—in the pen."

He paused to gasp for a painful breath, and Barbara choked and swallowed a sob. He heard it, and his eyes flew wide open in a final clear gaze. He looked up into the two faces, so beauty-filled and glowing with youth, now bent over him pitifully, and his smile took on with pain a tinge of something selfless as the distinct whisper came from his thick lips:

"S all right, Kid! Don't cry, little girl! You make a fine pair—fine for the race—and I'm—no loss!"

His quick glance dulled, roamed once about the bloody floor, and with the faint whisper growing more faint he breathed:

"Nasty mess! Always did—make me—sick!"

His eyes closed part way. He drew one long last gargling breath through the blood in his throat, and his head fell heavily on his shoulder.

Sloane laid down the heavy head; closed the lax eyelids. On the thick, pallid lips there was still the hurt, embarrassed smile as the dark blood of death trickled through them.

XII



"HE WAS one of the smoothest workers that ever lived," said Jones, the chief of detectives, a few minutes later. He stood with Pierpont looking down at the bodies of the two men on the floor of the tug's cabin. "I have had

considerable of a hunch all along that we never would get him *right*—alive, I mean, and for any big job. He never left any loose ends hanging. There was nothing to pin on him this time. If he had cut loose from this fighter we couldn't have proved anything. All the evidence was against Kelly."

"I had the evidence in *my* case," put in Condon, who had entered gloomily, "and I'd have got him sooner or later."

"Yes," Jones said soberly. "Later!"

Condon had to think about it, and in the mean time the banker asked—

"Is there any evidence against this girl?"

He looked around to make sure she had gone aboard the other boat with Sloane before he finished:

"This Miss Welland? The boy seems to have lost his head over her."

"Can you blame him? No," Jones said sharply, "she won't even have to appear. Why wouldn't he lose his head? I wouldn't give much for a man who didn't."

"She is a beauty, of course," the banker admitted. "But I hope to make the boy my heir, and the question of his marriage is one——"

"That he will settle himself if I am any judge of a scrapper," Jones interrupted irreverently. "He is one of these nice, pleasant-mannered boys that you don't want to stir up. And say! I stand up to stammer he is one wild Indian in the ring. That last wallop he handed Kelly— Oh-h, boy!"

He turned to Pierpont:

"I am proud to shake the hand of any member of his family—even a banker!"

And the financial baron blushed with pleasure even at this back-handed compliment as he gripped hands.

"Here's that option on the oil-lands," announced Parsons from the settee, where he had been pawing in the hand-bag which they had found underneath the seat. "And it's just the tract I am after for my people. It will make both the boys rich. You'd better take charge of it, sir."

He handed it to Pierpont who took it with the comment:

"No doubt about the ownership of this. It is to Sloane & Train. But we may bid against you for this tract; it is a sure thing. You won't get it for any bargain-counter price."

Parsons grinned.

"But I'll get it. I was sent with instructions to pay what I had to, but to get it!"

And he added as an after-thought—

"Besides, Train is my nephew, so I'm as much interested as you are in seeing that they get a good price."

"We will settle all that tomorrow. Let's get out of this mess," said Pierpont. "I am not used to it, and it goes to my stomach."

In the cabin of his own fast steam-yacht they found Barbara and Sloane fast asleep in a corner-seat. Her head was on his shoulder, and his cheek was pillowed in her hair.

"Babes in the wood," Parsons whispered. "What a pair to draw to!"

Pierpont suddenly recalled his wife's command to bring the girl home with him when she was found. He would take them both. When they got to his house, however, Sloane refused to be put to bed until he had gone to Chinatown to tell his partner that their option was safe and their fortune made.

"I'll go with you to see that you don't collapse," said his uncle. "If your partner is awake we will buy his share in that equity right now."

"Is that square business dealing," Sloane asked innocently, "with Parsons?"

His uncle did not answer until he was seated beside him in the car, when he said with a grin:

"Parsons doesn't know he is working for me—for our Western branch. I think I shall put him at the head of it. We keep up a show of competition."

Seeing Sloane's smile of understanding, the banker thought this a good time to spring another mine.

"Now you are ready to settle down, you will come into the firm. Your share of the profits on this sale will buy your way in, and I will double it. What do you say?"

"I want a year or two to look around," Sloane said without hesitation. "We want to prowl around Europe and other places first."

"All right."

With this gruff response the banker left the subject. Presently Sloane asked—

"What did Wing Wo Chong have to do with Hasbrouck's operations, do you know?"

"Nothing. He never knew anything about Hasbrouck's criminal side any more than I did. Wing Wo Chong is above suspicion. Oh, he was clever, that crook!"

"Did you know Hasbrouck?"

Sloane was roused from a torpor of fatigue.

"Only as a scholarly traveler and collector of Chinese objects of art. Yes. He was a many-sided man."

His uncle abruptly turned to ask:

"Did I hear you say he was in the penitentiary? What was the charge?"

"Attempted blackmail, I believe."

Sloane swallowed a yawn politely and added:

"I can't tell you why he went there. The other crooks laughed at his stories of his exploits. I believe he claimed to have helped design the *Buccaneer*!"

And the younger man sat up suddenly as he remembered it with a grin.

"He did," said Pierpont gravely. "He seemed to know something about everything."

"Well, I'll be darned! Wait until I tell Murph and Kinney," said Sloane.

 AT WING WO CHONG'S they found the bland Chinese youth on duty in the curio-shop which never closed. He reported after investigation that Mr. Train was awake and waiting. Train sat up in bed to welcome them as they came in.

"I knew you'd come. You got it?"

"Of course I got it," Sloane said. "Think I'd come back without it? How much do you want for your share? This is my uncle, J. M. Pierpont. He wants to buy it."

"I promised my uncle—" Train began.

"It's all the same. He is working for us," Pierpont interrupted. "He is authorized to give up to—"

He mentioned a six-figure numeral that made Train turn pale.

"Write a check for half that and you have bought my share," he announced and at the same time pressed a bell-button at his bed-head.

"No sense in that," Sloane protested. "You had the foresight to get that tract, and you ought to have—"

"You never had any sense anyway!" his partner informed him. "All you know is to fight and make all the money, while I lose it for us. Who fit for our first grub-stake? Where would it all be now if you hadn't got it while I lay here bandaged up like a sore thumb? It's all yours by rights, but I got to get married tomorrow. Is this—button hitched on to anything? Oh, excuse me!"

For at that moment the girl called Miriam appeared rubbing her eyes.

"What is it?" She looked about at Sloane and his uncle. "More trouble?"

"Uh-huh!" said Train. "You got a wild man on your hands for the rest of your days, and we got to get married and headed West tomorrow—today, I mean. So it's a case of packing in a hurry. Now I don't want any argument—"

"You won't get any," interrupted the girl called Miriam. "So stop this noise and go to sleep while I pack. The trip will do you good."

With a hand over his lips she put him firmly in place and turned to Sloane with the question:

"And is Barbara Welland all right? And is everything fixed up? Wing Wo Chong has been blaming himself for everything—pacing the floor. I was afraid he would shoot himself and hid that silenced Colt."

"Everything is fixed."

It was Pierpont who answered her.

"And no serious harm done. My nephew and my chauffeur were creased; but Kelly and Hasbrouck are both gone, and the Blackbeard case is closed. We may as well admit that Hasbrouck fooled us—all of us—and let it go at that. He had his good points, this man Hasbrouck. I shall reassure Wing myself. We are all in the same boat, and I can promise that the case will be dropped. Where is he?"

XIII



"I CONFESS I deceived you as to my name," Wing Wo Chong insisted on explaining to Dr. Wise when they next met. "But that was with no unworthy motive. I took over the name with the curio business of my friend Ah Sun upon his death, and it was in that shop that you met me. You assumed that Ah Sun was my name, and I did not undeceive you later because I did not want to end a relation that gave me pleasure. I knew you would not continue to accept my services if you knew I was the wealthy importer, Wing Wo Chong."

"As to Dr. Hasbrouck, I was as much deceived as you were. In all his dealings he showed himself to be a man of integrity and fine feeling. He was even associated with me in many worthy charities, and in the case of young Train I assumed his interest was purely philanthropic. I find it hard to believe that he was a predatory criminal at

heart, even now. He was a man who must have lived a double life literally, but I am sure he felt a real affection for Dr. Sloane and Barbara Welland."

"I agree with you," said the surgeon. "He had already arranged for the return to Barbara of the fortune Kelly had stolen from her uncle when he could have shared in the booty himself. Even if he lived a *Jekyll-and-Hyde* existence, we must admit that he closed his life on a noble note; he gave his life for Stuart Sloane and Barbara. I am glad that his crimes have been so lightly passed over in the papers. We owe that much to his memory."

The paper-reading public soon forgot the Blackbeard case in more live topics. Sloane found himself a front-page sensation for almost a fortnight, until the climax of the Welland-Sloane wedding.

"The Handsomest Pair That Ever Walked the Aisle of Old St. George's," was the general verdict of the headlines; and the wedding breakfast was at the Pierpont mansion.

Among the listed guests were Warden and Mrs. J. P. Murphy of Blackwell's Island; Dr. Wise, who gave away the bride; Wing Wo Chong in ceremonial robes and yellow girdle, Philip W. Lawson "with the J. M. Pierpont Company" in a new suit by Mitchell and looking like a British peer, and all the younger set, who had been lionizing the young doctor who had licked Shad Kelly.

It was near sunset when at last Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Sloane were left alone, and by then they had found their chairs on the deck of the *Cunardia* as she dropped down the bay with the ebb tide. With a long sigh of relief Sloane dropped into his place by Barbara's side and tucked in her rug.

"There—at last! For two weeks I have not had a minute with you alone. All that time I have seen you only over the shoulders of a pack of scrambling imbeciles."

"Very nice boys."

Barbara smiled at the doubtful compliment, but Sloane had turned sober as he leaned forward and shaded his eyes from the level red beams of the low sun.

"It must have been about here," he said slowly, "that they boarded the tug in the fog. Perhaps we are over the exact spot

where Hasbrouck took the two bullets that would have finished us. Why did he do it?"

He turned his eyes on the thoughtful face beside him, lovely in the rich glow.

"Like all men of woman born he fell in love with you at sight, but who would think him capable of the big sacrifice?"

Barbara turned on her man a look that kindled with deep, indulgent understanding and smiled a motherly smile.

"I really believe it never occurred to you that he had any affection for *you*. You haven't even seemed to notice that all smart New York has been at your feet. Don't you ever see yourself in the picture?"

"Now there's a queer thing!"

Sloane tilted his head judicially.

"Here I came East to rub up against some culture after being so long in the sticks. I did my prettiest—prunes, prisms and propriety—but I was mighty lonesome until I pulled the wild-West stuff. After I did six-gun stunts and knocked out Kelly here they come a-running and wagging their tails. Disappointing in a way!"

Barbara's little smile brooded over him.

"I suppose it never occurred to you that you had anything they admired more than stunts—more even than birth and breeding?" she asked slowly.

His large eyes opened wide with astonishment.

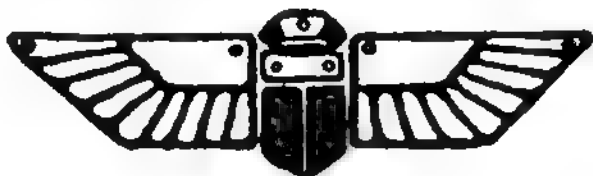
"For instance?"

"Well—" she considered him through narrowed lids—"such things as fearless courage, simple truthfulness, modesty. And then, you know, you are not such a repulsive monster in appearance when you——"

"Now—now—now!"

Sloane interrupted, drawing out the words with a rising inflection, and in his fine hazel eyes came a look of suspicion and hurt surprise—so boyishly sensitive and appealing that Barbara could keep her pose no longer. She knew that they were watched furtively by admiring fellow-passengers, but they might go hang. With a smile that began with a tremor of her Cupid-bow lips she flung both arms round his curly head, drew it down where it belonged, and as she rumbled it, she murmured:

"Oh—oh! You *are* the—the Texas Kid!"



ONE MOORISH SULTAN

by G. E. H.

LITTLE is commonly, or even uncommonly, known of the long line of Sultans of Morocco. A few names, perhaps half a dozen, are to be encountered in any general history of the world; hundreds have ceased to exist except in the pages of books dealing with Morocco alone. Perhaps in no other country is the picture drawn by Omar Khayyam so true—

“How Sultan after Sultan, with his pomp, abode his destined hour and went away.”

Even in the most detailed of Moroccan historical works, centuries must be dismissed with only a record of rules similar to the record of the ancient scriptures wherein—

“Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Japhet,” etc.

“Er-Rasheed succeeded, but he was drowned by his slaves in a tank at Ceuta, and was succeeded by his brother, Ali IV.”

They pass.

But of all the Moroccan Sultans, he who occupies the most prominent place in history was one who was great enough in his own time to rank with the rulers of Europe, to reign for fifty-five years, and *to die a natural death*. Which is peculiar, in view of certain facts: He overthrew his brother and sent ten thousand heads, including those of women and children, to Meknez, which he made his headquarters, and the bodies he had woven into a bridge over which his army crossed a river; during his reign he killed, with his own hands, twenty thousand of his subjects; the number of his sons, “who had to mount horses,”

was seven hundred, while daughters were even more multitudinous.

Mulai Ismail attained the throne in 1672 at the age of twenty-six, and his regal name became “Ameer el Muminim, el Mudhafir b’Illah, Ab-u-Nasir, Maolai Ismaail,” or “Prince of the Faithful, the Overcoming-in-God, Father of the Conqueror, my lord Ismail, son of the Noble.” And of him it is recorded:

“While during his lifetime not a human being in Morocco failed to tremble at his name, it is strangely significant of the real tendency of Islam that Ismail is remembered by the Moors of today not as the tyrant but as a great and religious Sultan.”

The great event of the long reign of Mulai Ismail was the evacuation of Tangier by the English, in 1684. The real cause of this was that the English were tired of the political corruption of their officials at Tangier, and decided to abandon this Moroccan city, which they did, blowing up the mole and the fortifications. But the Moors believed that the English had been frightened away, and thus the affair became generally acclaimed as Mulai Ismail’s greatest “victory,” and that it greatly strengthened him in the world affairs of his time is unquestionably true.

Ismail died at the age of eighty-seven. The news came to an army of slaves transporting building stones from the ruins of Carthaginian Volubilis to Meknez. They threw down the stones, some of which yet lie as they fell; they breathed deeply; the tyrant was dead. Then they prayed to Allah for the great and glorious Sultan, Mulai Ismail, “The Overcoming-in-God.”





Sir Mellivora

by LEO WALMSLEY

CHIP-CHIP-chip-chip-chipl!" The little brown bird fluttered down the acacia to a branch not six feet above the entrance to the home of Sir Mellivora. Ratel, flapped its wings impatiently, and renewed its chattering invitation.

"Chip-chip, chip-chipl—Come out old lazy-bones, the sky's overcast, the day's as cool as night, and I've found the richest store of honey that ever was."

Shortly from the burrow there came a curious noise, half-whistle, half-chuckle; and then the head of Sir Mellivora appeared, almost filling the doorway. His large brown eyes blinked as they accommodated themselves to the light of day, and a minute passed before they were diverted upward and focused on the now feverishly excited honey-guide. Sir Mellivora gave another chuckle then, not a completely enthusiastic one perhaps—for he was still sleepy—but one which translated might have said:

"Now then, my good fellow, what's all the fuss about? You know I've got a family to worry about now, and that I've been out hunting for my wife and children the whole night long. Life won't be worth living if this sort of thing goes on—Um-m! What were you saying about honey? I expect it's nothing but an old nest you've found—"

"Chip, chip-chip, chip-cheepl!"

The little bird left its branch and flew to another bush fifty yards away. Sir Mellivora blinked again. Then, with just a hasty, slightly harassed glance back into the burrow, where his family lay quietly asleep, he emerged, shook the dust from his fur and set off for the bush, at a steady jog-trot.

Now even when engaged on such a mildly exciting business as a honey-raid, you would have recognized Sir Mellivora as a creature of quite exceptional character. In general appearance, true, he might have been taken for a small species of badger. His size was that of a hare. The lower part of his body, his face, his limbs, even his long, powerful claws were black, while from the stump of his little tail, reaching to the forehead, was a "saddle" of brown-flecked silver-gray, divided from the black by a narrow band of white. But his demeanor, the poise of his body, the almost insolent look of self-assurance in his eyes labeled him as one for whom the jungle holds no fear, who possesses perfect confidence in himself in all matters relative to attack or defense.

There was no furtive glancing about him as he went, no eager sniffing of the air, no sudden stops, such as you will observe in the other jungle-folk—from the smallest mammal upward to the elephant. Actually he was not of the badger tribe at all, although his popular name—"The Honey-Badger"—suggests it. The polecats, wea-

sels, mongooses might have claimed a closer relationship, yet his tail was short and grew no bush, his muzzle was blunt, his figure sturdy.

He reached the acacia as the little bird, chirping in more satisfied, business-like tones, left it, and made its way to a more distant one. Sir Mellivora marked the direction in one quick, upward glance and jogged on as before.

For the coastal plains of East Africa the day was a remarkably cool one. The entire sky was overcast, a wind, east and mountain born, stirred the clumps of withered elephant-grass, and, sucking the scent from the acacia blossoms, exhaled a rare sweetness, like that of summer roses and honeysuckle. It was the sort of day that disturbs the whole time-table of the veld. By this time—it was but an hour before noon—the lions, leopards and their camp-followers, the jackals and hyenas, should have been in their lairs; the antelope and zebra, enjoying comparative immunity from attack, grazing on the plains or resting in the shade of the trees.

But the honey-guide had led Sir Mellivora scarce a mile when a herd of gazelle came bounding right between them, with a troop of five lions in pursuit. One of the latter—a young male—saw Sir Mellivora, and halted not ten yards in front of him. The honey-guide, scenting trouble and a possible end to the journey, flew back and, taking up a position on a bush immediately above the lion, chirped furiously. But Sir Mellivora merely chuckled, rolled back his top lip a fraction of an inch and made straight for the great cat, who crouching on his haunches looked as if he intended to spring.

But he did not do so. He had never met a ratel before. He had never met any animal, for that matter, smaller than himself who had not immediately frozen with terror or retreated at utmost speed—nor did he even turn his head. He was bewildered, nonplussed, and discretion being ever the better part of the lion's much-vaunted valor, he growled, turned, and with head apprehensively inclined so that he might keep Sir Mellivora well in view, loped off in the direction of his companions—a most inglorious retirement.

Sir Mellivora did not waste a glance in his direction. The honey-guide, chirping briskly, flew on, and he followed as if the dis-

comforting of a lion was too ordinary an occurrence in the daily routine of a ratel to be taken seriously.

I do not suppose there is in all Nature a more marvelous partnership than this of a tiny, insignificant-looking bird and a bold, fire-eating mammal; and unless you have seen a pair of them at work, you may be incredulous of its existence. Yet in any part of tropical Africa, in the very early morning, or when the day is dull, you may hear the insistent chirping of the honey-guide, and, if you watch carefully, observe the ratel jogging faithfully on in pursuit. Why, the natives know the business so well that when they hear a honey-guide they will imitate the ratel-chuckle and persuade the bird to lead them to the latest treasure-trove.

For another mile or so the "guide" led a trail across the level veld; then suddenly the acacia and mimosa gave way to a tall forest belt at the bank of a drought-attenuated river. A green monkey, doing sentry against any leopards which the dull weather might have lured from their lairs, gave the alarm at the honey-guide's approach, and the ironwood-tree whereon it watched was soon alive with a chattering, screaming mob. A flock of guinea-fowl joined in the general tumult, and a number of stately, golden-crested cranes feeding in the shallows flew up on heavy wings, and circled over the forest, uttering a discordant *hink-hink*.

But neither the honey-guide nor Sir Mellivora paid the slightest heed to this noise. A game-path meandered through the jungle close to the river-bank, and realizing that this was kinder to his partner's feet, the bird led the way along it: Sir Mellivora maintaining such a speed that perching was unnecessary.

And so on for perhaps half a mile, and then at a part of the forest where the vegetation became more dense and the path bent sharply to the river and faded out, the guide alighted on a branch of an enormous tree, that had either been lightning-struck or felled by termites, beat its wings furiously and chirped in such a way that Sir Mellivora gave a sudden spurt and brought himself quickly to the spot. After that he required no further assistance.

Scarcely a foot from the ground and leaning forward from a branch to which it had evidently been secured before the tree fell

was a short, thick log, split, hollowed, and bound again with bark-rope—leaving entrance-holes at either end: A beehive such as you will find hanging from the trees near any native habitation. But evidently it was a very old one; one that had long been abandoned by its human owners, and the swarm of wild bees which now used it as a store possibly had only been in occupation a few months.

That they had used their time well, however, was soon apparent to Sir Mellivora. With teeth and claws he cut and tore at the lashings, and in a moment the two halves had nothing but the richly filled comb to hold them together.

And the bees? They were small—scarcely larger than house-flies—yet venomous and brave as hornets. And they emerged from the hive and gathered in from the surrounding jungle in a thick, dusky, whirling cloud, filling the air with noise. Little they feared the claws and teeth and gleaming eyes of the robber. They alighted on his head, his back, his face, his belly, and stung as only they knew how.

But his skin was tough and loosely secured to the elastic body beneath; giving better protection than armor-plate. Oblivious to stings, he tore the hive asunder, buried his muzzle deep in the comb, and began to devour the sweet amber-tinted honey, and the little white grubs that wriggled among it, as if no food had passed his mouth for days. Nor was the honey-guide slow to reap the reward of its cunning. Still chirping it flew down to the debris of the hive, and flapping its wings to keep the insects at bay it fell to on the grubs, spearing them with its sharp beak, and tossing them down so fast one would have wondered how the chirps were possible!

 TEN minutes later Sir Mellivora, his little stomach stuffed tight as a drum, licked the last drop of nectar from his fur, preened himself, and turned his face toward home. The guide did not accompany him. There still remained a certain number of grubs to be attended to, and business so far as Sir Mellivora was concerned was done for the day.

Finding the path the ratel broke once more into his steady trot, not perhaps so speedy as before, yet one that soon put the forest and its noisy inmates well behind. He would have traveled faster for all that

had the state of his digestive system permitted: His mind, now that the lust for honey was satisfied, being not unlike that of any other husband who, without so much as a word, has surreptitiously left home on a private and indiscreet adventure. He was aware of a great uneasiness.

His wife, since the family came, had been unusually irritable and bad-tempered, and in spite of his lofty disdain of lions and other beasts of prey, he had for her a most wholesome respect. Had he been hunting food for the nest, of course, there would have been no cause for fear. She had no sentiment, and a tender guinea-fowl chick, for instance, would have made a perfect explanation.

No such outlook opened itself, however. Big game, giraffe, zebra, antelope he saw in vast numbers, for the lions were still on the move; but smaller fare seemed unusually scarce; and as he drew nearer home his uneasiness increased. Yet he dare not go back entirely empty-handed.

Reaching a sandy spruit where the bush grew thicker, and there were still patches of green among the sun-dried grass, he determined to hunt it for locusts. More carefully now, he entered the jungle by a disused jackal-path, and stopping shortly began to beat the grass with his feet, to make the insects move. A cricket leaped out.

Sir Mellivora made a lightning snap at it—missed—and bounded off in pursuit to the shade of a low bush into the foliage of which the grass thrust its tall blades. The cricket had come to rest on the ground. The ratel warily approached it—and suddenly he stopped dead, his eyes wide open—staring fixedly before him—as if he had become aware that danger threatened.

But shrewd though he was he did not see the danger. He stared into the jungle, searching the shadows of the grass: while above him coiled round a branch of the bush—so still you might have thought it was a branch—the black mamba, with horrid, gleaming eyes, measured the distance for its strike. For half a minute nothing happened, and then Sir Mellivora gave the slightest jerk of his head, and simultaneously the snake came down, like the thong of a whip, bit with unerring judgment just behind the neck, and swung up again.

Of all the reptiles of tropical Africa there is none so universally feared as the black

mamba: It is not, comparatively speaking, a large snake. A full-grown female averages little more than nine feet in length. But its habit of lying still in the branches of a tree, in long grass, in shady rock crevices; its marvelous speed and agility, its undoubted courage; above all the absolutely fatal action of its venom, more than make up for what it lacks in size and strength.

The venom acts almost entirely upon the nervous system, and consequently its effect is rapid. It will cause a dog to drop dead in a matter of five minutes. A white man has been known to expire within twenty minutes of a bite. One might imagine, therefore, that the ratel's death was just a matter of seconds. Not so.

The skin of Sir Mellivora was, as I have said before, tough and thick and so loosely spread upon his body that you could squeeze up a fold of it several inches in depth. And it was into the skin alone that the fangs of the snake pierced, and into the skin alone—thinly supplied with nerves and veins—that the poison was injected. The snake might just as well have bitten a tree. Certainly that would have been safer, for no creature attacks the ratel with impunity.

Startled though he naturally was by the suddenness of the mamba's strike, Sir Mellivora made no sound, nor did he move except to swing sharply round, elevate his head and take stock of the enemy. The mamba, too, remained quite still, three-quarters of its length coiled round the branch, the rest held stiff above, but curved like the neck of a swan, and ready to strike again. But it knew, or rather imagined it knew, that a second bite would be unnecessary. A few seconds now and the table would be spread. And Sir Mellivora knew that such was its line of reasoning; that so long as he stood there—so long would the snake remain out of danger's way. And his soul lusted for battle—and revenge.

But he was not rash. Here in the thick jungle was not an ideal battle-field. He must have space about him, room to maneuver, and no branches for the snake to take refuge in.

For perhaps twenty seconds he remained where he was—then with a feigned sluggishness of gait, as if the poison had already gripped his nerves, he moved along the path to the jungle's edge. He did not look round. The mamba uncoiled itself, fell

gently to the ground and followed confidently, almost within striking distance. Slowly, slowly went Sir Mellivora. Once he halted and looked as if he were about to drop. But that was just part of his well-considered plan.

He went on and at last reached the path-end, and saw before him a broad clearing, with an old termite heap in the middle of it—an ideal arena. And then he suddenly sprang to life. He rushed boldly into the open. The snake increased its speed so that its body appeared to be in the air and only its slender tail-tip on the ground. It halved the distance—quartered it by the time the ratel reached the ant-heap.

But just as it darted back its vicious little head for the strike—Sir Mellivora turned in his own length, feinted, dashed to one side, and charged dead on. He made no sound. There was no snarl on his face, no tense quivering of muscles—only a bright gleam in his brown eyes, the gleam of battle. But if you had seen that gleam in the eyes of a creature twenty times his size—you could have read no less determination in it.

The snake struck, and being perhaps the swiftest moving animal in the jungle it did not miss its mark. But once more the effect was nil. Sir Mellivora merely staggered a little, lunged forward, and taking the nearest portion of his enemy that offered, bit deep into the belly and held. The next moment, as if he had stood upon a spring, he was lifted clean into the air, dragged through a most marvelous side-spinning double somersault, and brought to ground again with the coils constantly lapping round and round him, creaking and straining his bones.

Yet still he held—and his muzzle dripped with the reptile's clammy blood—and his eyes were near blinded with it. Again he was lifted up. Again he was crashed to the ground; and this time with such a shock that the mouthful of muscle he held tore away and almost choked him. But that gave him the chance he was waiting for. Muscle—you can tear away three-quarters of the muscle of a snake and still the brute will live and kill; and smash every rib of it too, and its jaws, and destroy its eyesight and still it remains a ruthless, death-dealing enemy.

Sir Mellivora's first bite was but a matter of tactics; to cause the reptile pain—to rob it of its natural cautiousness. His next was judged with greater care. He waited

until the squirming coils presented an area of back. Then quickly his teeth cut in, through skin and flesh and into bone and met in that vital tissue—the spinal column. And nothing more was necessary.

From head to tail the muscles of the snake relaxed. The coils released themselves. Sir Mellivora was free. He took another bite, however, closer up to the neck; then quite satisfied that his enemy was dead, he carefully removed a few inches of skin, sliced out a sizable portion of meat, and, with this held tightly between his jaws, set off finally for home.

He reached the burrow ten minutes later, and following his invariable habit, halted at the mouth of it and chuckled a greeting to his wife, a chuckle which, I have no doubt, was intended to convey some hint as to the offering he had brought. But to his great surprise no answering chuckle came, only a faint and distressed mewling, that of the still immature young. Instantly he dropped the meat, scampered in—and discovered that his wife had gone.

IT DID not take Sir Mellivora long to discover that nothing tragic had happened to his wife—at least in the burrow or the precincts of it. Evidently she had gone of her own free-will, there was no trace of struggle, the ground held no scent of beast of prey; and shrewdly—possibly his own conscience was prompting—he decided that during his absence another honey-guide had come along with its beguiling chatter, and that she had fallen to it even as he had done.

Yet she had never left her young for so long before, even when he remained on guard. By their incessant mewling he knew they had not been suckled for an hour at least. What had happened to her? Sir Mellivora felt ill at ease. For a minute or so he lay down in the nest and allowed his three little ones to snuggle up to him, to bite at his muzzle and the stump of his tail; then unable to bear the suspense any longer he caressed them, and went out.

It was an easy matter for him to follow his wife's trail, but it brought no lessening of his fears to discover very soon that it led in the opposite direction to the one he had followed on his raid; that it was leading, in fact, toward the habitations of mankind. Now the human race to Sir Mellivora had ever been an unknown quan-

tity, and the unknown is ever to be feared. Never by any chance could a honey-guide persuade him to venture near a village. No, always would he prefer to do without food at all.

But his lady, no less a fighter than himself, was not so cautious. Several times during their courtship he had been obliged to fight to prevent her following a risky trail, and now it seemed that all his advice was to prove futile. Yet he did not hesitate to follow. The protection instinct in him, once roused, was fierce and quite unreasoning. The desire to see his mate again, and bring her back to safety, and the next a gnawing, unconsolable hunger.

And so he went on for the best part of an hour, and by that time any doubt as to the fatal direction of the trail was put at rest, for the lush about him was tramped down by domestic cattle, sheep and goat; the air reeked of the scent of fires, and human habitations. Shortly, too, there came signs of water—and cultivated fields—and at the edge of a lush plantain grove he halted for the first time.

But not for long, for there struck upon his ear suddenly a sharp *yap-yapping*, and a sound more familiar, the sibilant chuckle of his own species, the voice of his own wife. He did not sniff the air, he did not pause to reconnoiter. He forced his way quickly through the plantain-stems, and bounded across a well-beaten human path beyond, entered a patch of young maize, and emerged in a small clearing where a crop had been cut, and where there grew a solitary mango-tree heavy with luscious fruit, and containing among its branches no less than three wooden beehives, identical with the abandoned one which he himself had raided.

On a low branch a honey-guide was perched, beating its wings and chattering. Below, with her back to the tree-trunk, her paws raised to protect her face, was Lady Mellivora, and round her, yapping and snarling, were three large native dogs, and the almost lifeless body of another soaked with blood. Even as Sir Mellivora emerged from the maize one of the dogs rushed in to the attack, seized the female ratel by the scruff of the neck, worried her, but fell back immediately with a lump the size of a walnut clipped out of his muzzle.

Quickly the ratel recovered her old position, in time to meet the savage rush of the other two. But she was weakening. The

rearing of a family is in itself an exhausting business. For three weeks she had never ventured more than a few hundred yards from her home. Her muscles were stiff, her whole system out of condition, and Sir Mellivora in one quick glance saw that he had not a second to waste. With head close to the ground, tail held stiff and upright, he charged forward and reached the tree-trunk as the first dog, recovered from the shock of its wound, bounded in to help the other two; and it was in the hind-quarters on that animal that his sharp teeth met, even as they had done in the spinal column of the mamba.

The result, if not quite so dramatic, was equally successful. Howling with pain, the brute turned and, dodging its teeth, Sir Mellivora dived under the legs of one of the other dogs, bit upward at the throat, and held until the animal shook itself free, howling no less volubly joined the first, now standing at a safe distance away. And the third dog did not feel like carrying on the fight alone. He had managed to get a hold on Lady Mellivora's neck, or rather the loose skin of it; and he let go as quickly as he could, but not so quick as to avoid the teeth of his would-be victim, which

closed on one of his paws and almost bit it in two—would have done so certainly had not the ratel's strength been on the point of exhaustion.

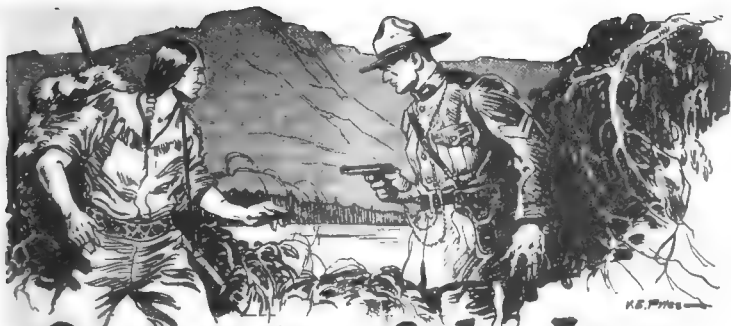
But it was that bite which undoubtedly put an end to the battle. Limping on three legs, tail between two, the dog incontinently bolted for the village, and the other two, more slowly perhaps, for their wounds were more serious, loped along in pursuit.

And the victors? There was no outward sign of greeting between them. For perhaps half a minute they stood facing one another, licking the blood from their fur. Then Sir Mellivora turned abruptly, broke into his familiar trot, and started off for home, milady, perhaps a little penitently, hugging close behind.



LATE that afternoon a honey-guide alighted on the acacia near to the Mellivora burrow, and chattered and chirped most seductively of a well-filled beehive wanting to be despoiled. But no answering chuckle came, only a low, drowsy gurgle, which, if you had been near enough, you would have recognized as the peaceful snoring of Sir Mellivora Ratel, his wife and family.





Servants of the Law

by H. MORTIMER BATTEN

Author of "The Silent Call."

THE pool lay in the hollow of the mountains, just a circle of crystal water overshadowed by the pine and poplar, and having no visible inlet or outlet. Crystal, yes; and so normally it was; but today its waters were of the color and consistency of *café au lait*. Moreover, there was something strange about that pool, something one might not have noticed peering through the bush from any one of the jagged ridges rising all round above the fallen timber, for there protruded from its surface at irregular intervals sundry pairs of huge exclamation marks, standing erect or flapping back and forth as if all were engaged in semaphore conversation. Also there were heavy swirlings and bubbles here and there, while above each pair of inverted champagne bottles hung a dense cloud of mosquitoes.

Yet, save for these curious signs there was nothing to indicate that the herd of cow-moose had sought the sanctuary of the pool as a haven from the flies and from the midday heat—though, of course, a skilled tracker might have followed them there. They lay hidden, their bodies totally submerged, only their huge ears and at intervals their nostrils rising to the surface, and the keenest of their foes, passing on the leeward side, might, indeed, have passed without the knowledge of their presence.

For the water was doing more than shield them from the flies and the sun's heat; it was hiding them from view, and more important still it was hiding their body scent.

Suddenly, however, a great ungainly head rose from the surface and remained a moment, bearded, streaming, and grotesque, while two great black eyes peered from it into the chaos around. Then, in the fraction of a second, the whole surface became alive. It was as if a hatching of gigantic water-mammals suddenly burst from the inert caddis, possessed of a desperate desire to leave their watery habitat. For the cow-moose rose with one accord, till the whole pool was a seething mass of spray—each great, ungainly beast wallowing in awkward bounds for the break in the timber by which they had entered.

What had alarmed them?—for alarmed they certainly were, and desperately so. Yet there had been no sound on the midday heat save the buzzing of cicadas and the rhythmic purr of the spruce bugs. The first of the cows reached the opening, her half-grown, ungainly calf beside her, then came the rest with their calves, jostling each other like oxen on market day as their paths converged at the opening of the runway.

Then above the slush of wet bodies and the rumble of hoofs there rang a single rifle shot, and one of the cows fell to her

knees, uttering a grunting bleat, presumably to her calf. She was trampled over by the rest, her calf was borne on with them, and there, very still she lay on the trodden earth, among the dripping foliage.

So the rumble of hoofs died, and soon silence fell again save the never ceasing insect life. The cow-moose was dead, shot through the spine, so some one did not care for the white man's game laws, nor heed the boundaries of the great National Reserve. Some poor — out of grub, perhaps, so we must not judge too soon.

About ten minutes passed, then a man came forth from the thickets—an unkempt, ragged individual, whose black hair hung to his shoulders. There was nothing about his carriage which suggested hunger—indeed the whole impression he gave was one of wiry quickness and panther-like alertness. His feet were shod in moose-hide moccasins from which still hung a ragged adornment of stained porcupine quills, while the tattered finery of his buckskin shirt and trousers lent luster to his primitive manhood. Over his shoulder hung a service carbine, and his face was lean, wolfish, and dangerously keen. The man was an Indian, and his name was Nahara Too. No mean hunter, Nahara Too!

Nahara went up to the dead moose, and drawing his hunting-knife he went to work quickly and skilfully. He stripped off the skin, or rather a portion of it, then he took some of the meat. It was of no use taking much, because he was alone, and it would not keep, so he took only the best and left the rest for the wolverines.

While Nahara was at work the calf came back to look for its mother, and peered at him big-eyed not ten paces away. It moved slowly round in the bush, watching the Indian at his gruesome work, but there was nothing to indicate that Nahara even so much as saw it. He made two thongs with which to carry the hide, then he rolled the meat up in it, flung his heavy burden over his shoulders, and trudged silently off—back toward his canoe.

But Nahara's luck was out, for ere he gained his canoe he heard a metallic click in the bush behind him, and knew it to be the click of a safety catch. He froze in his tracks, for he felt the sights burning into his shoulders, and he knew that at last the game was up.

"Drop your gun, Nahara, also your knife—in double-quick time!"

Nahara obeyed. He had no alternative, then he turned and looked back as his captor stepped from a thicket.

"You, Vaughan!" he said in a quiet voice, but without surprise.

The white man made no comment. He took up the Indian's belongings and leaned them against a tree, then he said:

"I've been watching you the thick end of a month, Nahara. Three times already I've warned you. You can't say but that I've given you every chance. You'll go to the jug this time."

Nahara shrugged his shoulders indifferently, but his face was not pleasant to behold. This was the white man's law, and Nahara hated that law. Many times he had broken it for the sake of breaking it, and, too clever to be caught, he had yet let the rangers know that he was defying them. To him, the rangers were the law. To his way of reasoning Val Vaughan, the man standing before him, was responsible for the changed order of things. And Nahara had hunted that range ere the fetters of the law were known—hunted in freedom, as his fathers had hunted before him.

"What now?" inquired the Indian at length.

"You are coming back to Outpost River," Vaughan answered. "The skin and the moose-meat we will take. We shall need them as evidence, but we will leave your rifle and the knife till I return with the inspector. You will not need *those*."

Then Nahara stepped forward and leered into the ranger's face.

"Today you what you call the 'high horse,' ah?" said he. "But, some day, I kill you for this!"

Then it was that Vaughan struck the man—struck him a blow which smashed his own knuckles, as the order of things out there justified, but Nahara went his way peaceably, yet with the slur upon his manhood indelibly engraved.



TWO days later, having left Nahara under arrest at Outpost River, Vaughan returned with the inspector to collect what evidence there was by the pool. It was sun-down when they arrived, and there, of course, was the evidence staring them in the face. When there was light enough they would take photographs, for they meant to leave no stone

turned. Nahara was a bad Indian, and they intended to make an example of him. Quite prepared were they to overlook the occasional killing of moose and deer for food, but this systematic wastage, this killing of female animals out of season, simply in defiance of the law, could not go on.

Near to the pool the two rangers made their camp and lighted their fire, and as the velvety darkness of the forest night closed about them they heard at intervals the sound of stealthy steps, now here, now there. An inquisitive bear, no doubt, or possibly a panther, and they paid little heed. They were sitting over their pipes when Vaughan suddenly rose, his fingers clutching his rifle, gazing over the inspector's shoulder. The latter did not move.

"What is it?" he questioned quietly.

A grim smile curved Vaughan's lips.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed. "You poor little ——!"

The inspector also rose, and there, behind him, the firelight reflected in the wonder of its gaze, stood a straddle-legged moose-calf, which clearly had no fear of them.

Vaughan went up and stroked his nose. It tried to suck his fingers. He felt its ribs.

"Starving!" he announced. "Isn't it an infernal shame? Doubtless the calf of Nahara's victim, haunting the place where the smell of its mother still hangs."

They had plenty of grub with them, including canned milk and oatmeal, so they fed the calf sumptuously, and it lay down near to them for the night. Next morning it followed, stumbling at their heels, sucking their clothing at every chance, while they did what had to be done. And finally it followed them out over the mountain route by which they had come. And so little Wama became the established pet at Outpost River.

Nahara was, of course, sent to prison. His term was a short one, but it was not likely that he would ever entertain very happy memories of it, for it was for him to carry home to his people the terror of white man's justice. Moreover, his punishment did not cease there, for the rangers in the meantime had visited Nahara's chief, and talked long and earnestly with him on the welfare of his tribe. So when Nahara got back his chief ordered that he be publicly whipped for bringing disfavor upon his tribe and for destroying game to no useful purpose.

Nahara was not without his enemies

among his own people, and the old chief, anxious to make a good show of it, saw to it that Nahara's enemies were chosen to wield the rawhide. This was an affair after the hearts of all, reminiscent of the good old days, though enshrouding it all in a halo of light was the justice of the white man's law.

"It is well that it come from you rather than from us," the white ranger had said. "Nahara must suffer that your tribe may prosper under the law of the paleface, even as the paleface themselves prosper."

So, by a savage creed, the prosperity of the tribe would be in exact ratio to Nahara's sufferings.

Three weeks after the Indian's return to his tribe he left it again, broken in health and in spirit. His squaw wished to follow him, and he had to strike her many times ere she would obey his order to remain with the tribe and take good care of their little daughter, "Snow on the Mountains," till such time as he returned. For assuredly he *would* return when the shame and the shadow had died from his name.

He went as a child goes forth into the world, went in all his tattered finery, and he drifted southward. He drifted into the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and he drifted out again. He guided a white explorer north of the Great Slave Lake, was two years in the Arctic, and guided the explorer safely back. Then he and the explorer, regaining civilization's edge, both got roaring drunk, and Nahara drew his knife. Of course he went to prison again. That was the white man's law.

He was converted under the Holy Cross and took the Blue Ribbon, but a week later he went to prison once more for riotous debauchery. Again he was converted, again he took the Ribbon, and again he got drunk and went to prison. So he came to regard the white man's law as a mockery of itself, and the white man's creeds as a travesty of God. He married an Italian woman and deserted her. From Calgary he drifted to Winnipeg, and he established the record time on the winter trail between Winnipeg and Fort William, driving the Northern Packet. He became known as an Indian with gifts if he could but use them to effect.

Then the earthquake came which shook the world—the war—and Nahara drove a dog team two thousand miles across the snowy wastes and went to other lands. With the scum of the north-country, out

in search of grub tickets, with the cream of the world's pioneers, with all the blotched and motley throng he went, and shoulder to shoulder, man to man, he toiled and suffered with the rest.

Three years later he returned, pronounced by the law as war-broken and useless. The desire to go back to his own land was dead, for he had seen so much that he no longer wished to tell his people of it. It was too long a story, and he was too weary. . Also they would not understand.

But there shone on Nahara's horizon one lone star. Very brightly it shone, fresh and immutable as the dawn. Ten years had passed since he left the children of the teepees, but it left his memories unchanged. For him the meadows of his youth were still rich in musquash and beaver, and the fat deer were in the grassy bays.

Hard times followed Nahara's return, and his youth was passing. His constitution had been wonderful, but after all he was but a red man. And now the cough of the lungs assailed him, and he knew that his face was toward the sunset.

Yet to Nahara that knowledge bore no sadness. He was not afraid. He had drunk deeply of the cup of life; he knew its sweetness and its gall, and he feared not to drain its dregs. Life owed him nothing. Assuredly he owed nothing to the world, which to him had evolved itself into the white man's law. For ten years the law had stood over him like a drawn sword, ready, inexorable, crushing all men into submission, even as he was crushed, though their hearts yearned for freedom. The law! That was law! To him the tyranny of military rule was but its semblance—rising like a brass god over all creation, though its power dissolved into smoke for those who feared not human suffering. Once he had regarded the law as a god indeed, but now he knew. He no longer feared it, for he saw in its power but a feeble thing—like the Blue Ribbon of the priests—for it was helpless to stay the human will.

So one day Nahara turned his face northward again, knowing that his feet were set toward the journey's end.



DURING the Winter succeeding her capture Wama, the moose calf, was broken to harness, and so Vaughan was able to satisfy a pet desire. For long he had held that the wild deer of the woods,

the moose and the caribou, might aptly be employed by the Mines and Forests department as beasts of burden. Always they were short of dogs, and dogs at any rate were expensive, while food had to be carried for them. The moose, on the other hand, could feed itself anywhere, and compared with the sled-dog, or even a whole train thereof, it was a mighty beast.

So, left alone when Winter came with God and the snows, Vaughan set to work to train his moose, and so well did he succeed that very soon he had little use for his dogs. He used the moose as he might have used a pack-horse, traveling overland instead of by the long and circuitous routes of the waterways. This was rendered possible by the animal's wonderful knowledge as to the whereabouts of drifts. Guided by some mysterious sense it would jog despondently in and out, seeking the wind-swept patches, sometimes making a seemingly needless detour to avoid the deep snow, but unerringly returning to their line of travel by the most direct route. It could pack on its shoulders more than the strongest man could carry, and trot all day as fast as an unladen man could trot on snowshoes, feeding during the night and taking its rest while it fed.

All next Summer Wama was used as a draught-animal, and the principals of the department became much interested. It drew Vaughan before their notice, but of course there was just one fly in the ointment. Wama was becoming so fierce that no one but Vaughan could go near her. She would rear like a horse and strike out with her terrible forehoofs, uttering a trumpet-like squeal, should any one try to make friends with her. And whenever Vaughan left her tethered outside trading-post or depot, he was compelled to hang a glaring notice over her ears, incidentally eclipsing her eyes—"This Animal is Dangerous!"

Naturally he and his strange companion became somewhat famous, but all who had anything to do with Wama were unanimous in the opinion that they would prefer dogs.

Things were going well with Vaughan, for he was a very able servant of the law—ever ready to give quarter where it was deserved, but inexorable in his justice. As civilization advanced Outpost River became more than an outpost, and from it the

tentacles of government groped their way outward into the wild, till Vaughan had many rangers under him. He built a bungalow, trained flowers over the walls, and took to himself a wife. Time passed, and the music of children's laughter crept into his life. And no call came to Vaughan when the whole earth shook, for he had his own great work there in the untrodden places. Ten years passed, and the first shades of Autumn laid their frosted fingers upon the ranger's temples.

Christmas was near. Vaughan had been up country visiting some of his outposts, but determined to spend the festive season with his family he made a hard push to get back. Wama as usual was carrying his packs, and his half-breed servant accompanied him, the moose eager to make good time now that her nose was toward home.

The trail was one which she knew well, for it led down a rocky defile, piled and pillared on either side with gigantic columns of ice. And when the close of the short day found them only twelve miles from home they decided to push on rather than spend another night on the trails.

They had not made another three miles, however, when Wama stopped and refused to budge. No mule on earth was more obstinate than Wama when she chose. Vaughan tried coaxing, but she would not stir. He went ahead, calling after her, but she stood with her forelegs wide apart like a wooden image.

What to do Vaughan did not know. Wama was quite prepared to go back, but go forward she would not. The half-breed, of course, became superstitious, and very soon he too refused to go on. He said that some evil awaited them on the trail, and that the moose knew it. He rather suspected wolves, or possibly a grizzly lurking and hiding for them. But the ranger knew

that he feared the River *Inua*, the dread ghost of the waters.

Vaughan cared not a rap for wolves nor *Inuas*, but he knew that it was as useless to argue against the breed's superstitions as against Wama's obstinacy, and thoroughly at odds with them both he decided to make camp where they were. Indeed he had no alternative but to return eight or nine miles to a baseline crossing, then make a wide detour homewards over the most appalling going, which, of course, was unthinkable.

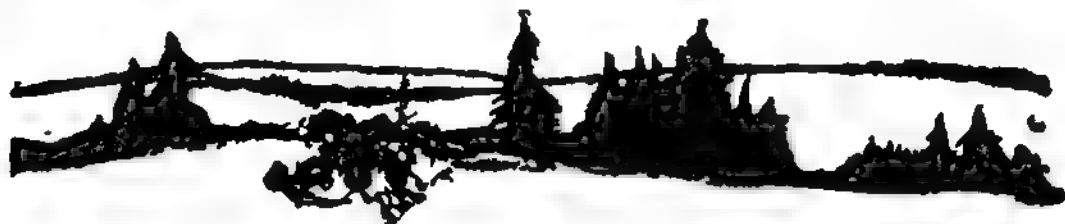
They were astir next morning with the first glimmer of dawn, and Wama, having forgotten her prejudice, they were soon into their stride again. The sun was up when, gaining the mouth of the defile only two miles from home, something prompted Vaughan to look back.

Then it was that he saw a man lying between two boulders some fifty feet above the trail. Vaughan called to him, but he did not stir, and the ranger knew then that he had answered yet another call, for the cold was intense. So Vaughan went up among the rocks to see what there was to see.

The man lay between two boulders, his sightless gaze still fixed along the sights of a service rifle trained on the open vista down which they had come. His stark fingers were locked about the trigger-guard, hoary with ice where his breath had settled.

The heart of the ranger was heavy as he looked down at that still, cold figure—silent evidence of the law which he himself served so ably. He knew now why Wama had refused to take the trail, but his gaze became misty as he saw, protruding from the Indian's pocket in significance of the season—a tousel-headed plaster doll.

So Nahara's star had shone, and he had forgotten that his little girl, "Snow on the Mountains," would be grown-up now.



Iroquois! Iroquois!

A five-part story Part II.

by **HUGH PENDEXTER**



Author of "Rifle Rule," "Old Misery," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IN 1764, eleven years before the colonies dug up the red ax with England, I had been brought to the Canajoharie district of New York by my Uncle David Whittlesey. Here I learned to know the Indians as brothers, and the Mohawk leader, Joseph Brant, as a friend.

Best of all I knew Horace Martin, self-styled "last of the macaronis," who forever prated of the decline of manners in these times. His incessant tirades earned him the nickname "Mad" Martin.

Not until 1774 did Martin tell me that he had a daughter.

"You—married!" I cried out in surprise.

"My wife was of Seneca-French blood. She died when Nancy was born. Nancy I left in Montreal with her grandfather. Now she is coming to me," he explained.

A few days later Nancy Martin arrived. She was a strange mixture of white and Indian, lapsing at will into the tricks of either race.

One morning my uncle gave me a beautiful new rifle, with a secret compartment in the stock, and in a few words told me that there was danger of war.

To my inquiries he replied:

"Donald MacDonald, the Johnstown Highlander is traveling around and talking loud. Sheriff White

is sending a man named Newberry up and down the river to threaten the settlers. But our Tryon County Committee of Safety will stop their tongues."

His words were borne out by Peter Bolduc, a French-Canadian trader who arrived later.

"Tell your uncle," he warned me, "that a call has been sent out for a Continental Congress to meet on September fourth in Philadelphia."

I hastened to the Martin house and learned from Nancy that in case of war the Indians might very easily side with England. As she was a member of the Wolf clan, Nancy knew many of the Indians' secrets.

The next day I had a fight with the drunken Newberry for insulting Nancy, and knocked him down, breaking his jaw.

This grievance, added to Donald MacDonald's hatred for me and my uncle, because of our siding with the colonies against the king, soon brought a warrant for my arrest.

"You'll not be long in jail, Benajah," my uncle told me.

"Let him try to make trouble and we'll make an example Tryon County law-breakers will long remember," cried MacDonald.

Outraged to the bottom of my soul, I set out, leaving my uncle behind, for the jail at Johnstown.

THE roads on both sides of the river were bad, being filled with mud-holes and ruts and rocks, nor was our side of the river any worse than "The King's Highway" on the north shore. Wherever possible travelers took to the hills to escape stretches of swamp or overflowed meadow-lands.

My escort was anxious to have the busi-

ness over with and had no time to spend in conversation with me.

We passed through Canajoharie Castle without pausing. A stranger to the valley would have observed but little red ownership in this village, as the houses were frame structures, well built and furnished after the white fashion, and having chimneys in place of the customary smoke-hole in the roof.

It was the home of "King" Hendrick, killed in the French War, and of Joseph Brant's father. Joseph and his sister had lived here as children, and Joseph did not leave the village for Fort Hunter until after his wife died in 1772. Sheriff White knew of my friendship with the Mohawks and perhaps feared I might make an appeal to be rescued. If so he was entertaining a needless worry as I believed Sir John would be as keen to be rid of me as White had been to serve the writ.

A few miles of the rough road brought us to Fort Hunter at the mouth of Schoharie Creek. The view in the southwest was varied and wildly beautiful.

Hills and bottoms were largely covered by the ancient forest, the growths of hemlock, maple, pine and oak stretching away from Cherry Valley to Unadilla and thence sweeping on deep into Pennsylvania. It will be very difficult for the next generation to realize the awful solemnity of that endless forest crown and the utter insignificance of casual openings consisting of natural meadows, or clearings made by ax and fire.

Fort Hunter was built in the French War to protect Amsterdam and Schenectady. It did not seem possible that within a score of years the frontier had been pushed back so far east. As we crossed the river I glimpsed Little Abraham, one of the Mohawk chiefs who was celebrated as an orator and who was much liked by the settlers because of his pacific disposition. He stared at us curiously and Sheriff White quickened the pace. But I had no desire to appeal to Little Abraham; nor even to Joseph Brant, had I seen him.

After we crossed the river White had me ride beside him and questioned me sharply about the Committee of Safety and demanded to know the names of those present. There was nothing about that first meeting which I was not free to disclose, but I persisted in my silence.

White angrily warned me:

"You better let your tongue wag. Might help your case. You're in a pretty bad pickle, young man. Assaulting a king's officer!"

"As much of a king's officer as I am a sachem," I jeered. "I busted the jaw of a varmint after he struck a little girl, whose father was the friend of Sir William Johnson. You're carrying bad belts. You'll be wishing to be rid of them."

The sheriff chewed his lips in chagrin.

McDonald's blue eyes lowered on me savagely, and he harshly reminded me:

"Sir William is dead. His friendships were buried with him. Sir John now lives in Johnson Hall. Let the brat's father complain to him if she's been mishandled. You're not ordained to ride round the country protecting young girls."

"You don't dare talk that into Iroquois wampum," I told him. "Nancy Martin is Seneca according to their reckoning. Every man and woman of the Wolf clan in the Six Nations look on her as a sister."

"I'm talking to you," growled McDonald. "I know what to talk into an Iroquois belt."

"And he hit me when I wasn't looking," spoke up Newberry.

This made me smile. As he spoke he was caressing his chin, and it was plain a man must have a mighty long arm to reach around from behind and strike a blow strong enough to break the bone. Even McDonald was grimly amused.

Sheriff White wrathfully exclaimed:

"It makes no difference how he hit you. You was the representative of the sheriff and of all the magistrates of this country. You was just the same as a king's officer. You oughter laid him dead at your feet for assaulting the Law."

"I'd like fine to have stood in his shoes when you overtook him, laddie," McDonald softly informed me.

"Which means you'd like to have stood in his shoes when he struck a child. I believe you, McDonald. Could it have been that way you'd have got what he did."

His gaze was very evil as he leaned toward me and whispered:

"You young rebel dog! Wait. You'll find me standing in my own shoes soon."

I believed he meant he would deal with me after I was locked up in the stone jail, but his threats scared me none. Perhaps his ferocious mind was anticipating the time when he was to lead his "white" Indians up and down the valley.

We had no more talk. When we rode into Johnstown a score of men and women lined the street leading to the commodious two-story structure that served as jail, but was more like a large inn in appearance. For the most part the spectators were silent and satisfied with staring.

Here and there a man or woman called out abuse at me and shouted prophecies

concerning my fate. Johnstown and Johnson Hall, a fourth of a mile to the north, were intensely loyal. I had expected no sympathy.

"When you going to hang him, Mac?" one man bawled.

"Stretch him up and give him thirteen to the down with a wire cat!" cried a woman.

And one man hoarsely demanded—

"Where's the old rat, his uncle, Sheriff White?"

Without any delay I was hustled through the crowd before the jail-entrance and thrust into a strong-room back of the small apartment that served as the sheriff's office. With the exception of some bread and cheese, purchased by White outside of Fort Hunter, I had had nothing to eat and my appetite was clamorous.

It was late evening before the door opened and White, backed by several of Sir John's tenants, entered with candles, bread and meat, and a jug of water. Scarcely a word was spoken until I had broken my fast and quenched my thirst. Then the sheriff told me—

"You'll come with us."

The invitation, or command, sounded ominous; yet commonsense told me they could not be planning any physical mischief. They conducted me to the office, and there I beheld Sir John, seated in the shadows, a cloak drawn about him.

He was a dramatic, gloomy figure of a man, stanchly loyal to the Crown, but incapable of attracting and holding friendships. His father had been well liked by all, whether red or white, Whig or Tory. How he would have steered his troubled course had he lived will never be known.

"This is the rebel miscreant, Sir John," announced the sheriff in his bombastic way.

"Gently, sheriff," admonished Sir John. "This young man is not here because of any mischievous political beliefs.

"Mr. Whittlesley," he said to me, "I know your uncle, a well-meaning but much misled man. I understand you were with him at a recent meeting of a so-called Committee of Safety. I'm sorry if you've been influenced to share some of the prejudices of some of your elders. You should work to keep trouble from our valley. I regret to find you a prisoner in my jail. Your offense is very serious, but doubtless was prompted by hot blood and a hot temper.

"Colonel Guy Johnson will view it more harshly than I, I fear. I come here at some inconvenience to see if we can't arrange it to the mutual satisfaction of the law and yourself. Now as to this new committee. Just what does it propose to do?"

"That is for my elders to tell. I'm only concerned to find myself held in jail as an evil-doer. In *our* jail, not yours, Sir John."

"My jail and my courthouse until a matter of seven hundred pounds has been paid me," he corrected, his voice rising thin and strident. "You refuse to relate what occurred at the committee meeting?"

"I have nothing to tell except about how I whipped the man Newberry."

"He's an obstinate, dogged, young hound, Sir John," broke in the sheriff. "Not a word would he say although I questioned him shrewdly on the way here."

Sir John came to his feet and gathered his cloak about him and turning at the door informed me:

"I fear I can do nothing for you, Whittlesey, as long as you continue in such a state of mind. I came here to adjust the differences between you and the complainant swearing out the writ. He was doing the king's work in learning whom His Majesty can depend upon. Your assault upon him was a very grave offense. Your stubbornness increases the fault. Perhaps a period of retirement may change your mind."

And before I could answer him and explain how I came to clip Newberry on the jaw he had passed through the door and I was being hustled back to the strong-room.



THE times had indeed changed when within the course of three months, or since the day Sir William died, a Whittlesey could be locked up like a felon and on the say-so of a clumsy-minded brute of the Newberry type.

Nearby was Johnson Hall, where my uncle and I and Mr. Martin ever had been made welcome. Only four miles away lived our friends the Fondas at Fonda's Bush.

And here was I in the Johnstown jail! What short shift Sir William would have given Newberry for his conduct toward an old friend's little girl! And yet I tried not to be too unfair to Sir John; for there was nothing to indicate he understood the facts of the case. Self-interest would not allow

him to countenance any insult to a woman of the Seneca blood.

The Whittleseys and their friends, however, would receive small sympathy from him or from Guy Johnson: We were painted with the wrong brush. Somewhat depressed, and wishing I could change my pallet of blankets for the dry pine-needle floor of the forest, I finally managed to sleep.

Two of the sheriff's deputies, armed with clubs and pistols as if I were a desperate creature, brought me bread and tea in the morning and stood at the door while I ate.

"I want some water," I told them.

One fellow pointed to the tea. I poured it on the floor.

"English tea ain't good enough for his fine stomach," said one.

"He'll dry out and warp like an empty barrel before he gets else," said the other. And with that they left me.

For an hour after their departure I gave no thought to their remarks. Then I began to recognize the fact I was very thirsty. Another hour found me picturing the Mohawk at freshet time, when the lowlands were overflowed and every creek was contributing its transparent brown flood.

The vision maddened me and to augment my sore discomfort I conjured up before my inner eyes the deep gulf at the foot of the Little Falls. Had I been abroad in the forest I would have sucked a bullet, chewed roots, and contented myself with knowing I would soon find a stream.

But to be a prisoner, shut in by strong walls and with nothing to distract my thoughts was torture. At midday I heard steps outside my door and attempted to simulate indifference. I puckered my lips to whistle and could not moisten them. This time it was Sheriff White.

He stood in the doorway and amiably suggested—

"What about some food and cold beer in my office while we talk over things?"

"When do I go before a magistrate?"

"I don't know. In a few days, mebbe. Of course it all depends on you. You and I can shorten up the time of waiting with a little talk. The beer is just from the cellar and is fine and cold."

I tried to lick my lips.

"I'd keenly enjoy the beer," I admitted.

"Very much indeed, as your men have refused me even water to drink."

"The scoundrels!" he cried. "I told

them to serve you with a pot of good tea."

"They brought tea. I wanted water. I do not drink tea."

"Water or good beer. Both out front waiting for you. But if we drink we must talk, of course."

My hopes vanished.

I turned to the window and drummed idly on the pane and assured him:

"There's nothing in my bag of talk you would care to hear. I'm only concerned with being taken before a magistrate where I can face that low dog, who made the complaint against me——"

"Enough!" shouted the sheriff. "Stay here till a magistrate can attend to your business. If you get any satisfaction from your sullen disposition; then satisfy your thirst with it."

I caught up a stool, but the door slammed and the bar fell, and I was alone once more.

From the window I gazed toward Fonda's Bush, where lived our friends; and where, within a mile of the settlement, lived John Butler, who with the Claus and the Johnsons, would not mind if I suffered considerable. My one consolation was the belief my imprisonment was intended more to force a recital of what the committee had done and proposed to do rather than to satisfy the vengeance of Newberry.

It also pleased me to think that had the sheriff and Sir John known how little Miss Nancy stood in the background they would have hesitated to allow Newberry to appear at all in the case. I grimly told myself that White and his powerful patrons would find me to be a nuisance.

I would not talk, thereby permitting them to believe much more than the simple records of our first meeting warranted. Sir John, cold-blooded and cautious, would not dare to deny me a hearing over-long; nor to permit me to suffer to a serious extent.

Already he had learned that Johnson Hall and Guy Park could not stop the settlers from doing their own thinking and talking. And he was never one to precipitate trouble. And it's only fair that I should believe he was actuated by principle. For he must have known that did the colonies strike the red ax into the war-post and by any miracle should win the uneven fight he stood to lose the greatest domain held by any one family in North America with the exception of the Penn Grants.

The sheriff vanished and quickly returned with a jug. I drank deeply.

When with a sigh of satisfaction I set the jug down, Thayendanegea, first of the Mohawks, said:

"My heart is heavy that David Whitlesey's boy should suffer for want of water in the land of the Kaniengehaga. But white men refused him, not the People of the Place of Flint. You will come to the front room and wait till I come back."

Sheriff White made no objections, but led the way.

Miss Nancy, who had said scarcely a word, seized my hand again the moment I quit drinking from the jug; and walking thus, like two children, we followed the chief. He paused in the doorway, looked at us whimsically and told me in Mohawk:

"When a Seneca woman of the Wolf clan comes to a Mohawk, even if he belongs to my clan, that of the Bear, the Mohawk finds she is his little sister. He must listen when she opens her bag of talk. Her words are so many white belts. When she says a young man is in trouble, a man who has been adopted into the Wolf Clan of the Mohawks, then the Bear knows he must help the Wolf."

"Adopted into the Wolf clan!" faintly exclaimed Miss Nancy, dropping my hand.

Brant was referring to the old matter of the woman whose child I had pulled from the river. But Captain Brant had exaggerated. Since the grateful mother had told me I should be her son, several festivals had been celebrated without my name and the name of my new parents, and the name of the woman's clan, being publicly announced. Without this ancient ceremony there could be no adoption.

True the mother would look upon me as her son, but I could never claim brotherhood in any clan. I briefly explained this to the girl, but she shook her head and persisted:

"You are of the Wolf clan. You are my brother. And you never told me!"



BRANT'S eyes twinkled as he gazed at her slight figure and wistful face. In the Seneca dialect he said:

"Newataquaah comes to help a white man and finds he is her brother. So she is very happy, and her heart is as light as the wing of a bird in the air."

"But I am not of the Wolf clan," I de-

clared. "I would like to be, but my name has not been called. To make me a Wolf my name should have been called at the Strawberry Festival, the first held after I saved the boy."

"You are my brother," earnestly repeated the girl.

I was still trying to explain that the woman's word meant nothing, no more than as if she made a confession of sins, and had promised to mend her life, without holding strings of white wampum in her hands.

I was still talking when we entered the small office. Brant spoke up and gravely reminded me:

"A Wolf can not marry a Wolf. Newataquaah has found a brother."

"Nonsense!" I exploded. "That is; I mean I am not of the Wolf clan, of any clan."

But he was through the outside door and we were alone. The girl was silent and very pensive, and thinking to stir her into conversation I told her:

"Of course, Nancy, we're both white. And any nice white girl is my sister when she needs help."

"My mother was half-Seneca. She was of the Wolf clan. I am as much of the Wolf clan as if both parents were Senecas. My children would be of the Wolf clan and so accepted among all Iroquois."

"Children are of the clan of the mother," I gravely conceded. "There must be two clans in each family. But the ancient law that clan can never marry clan is no longer observed. So long as they are not of the same nation——"

"The ancient law should never have been changed," she fiercely broke in. "Wolves are brothers wherever that clan is found."

I broke the talk and changed her mood by abruptly asking:

"How did you leave your father?"

Her face lighted and there was a suggestion of a dimple as she replied:

"Still worrying about the lack of tea. Father would make a poor Boston patriot."

"It was a fine thing for you to do—to come and find me like this."

But she would not have it that way, and with feminine disregard for the facts cited my alleged adoption as an all-sufficient reason why she should come to my rescue.

"A Wolf must help a Wolf," she told me.

"I am not a Wolf. Nor did you think I was when you left home to find me."

"And there was a debt to be paid," she calmly went on. "I have paid a little on that debt. They wouldn't have kept you here more than a day or so longer. In another day or so your uncle would have come with his Bostonians behind him, all carrying long rifles. I told him I would find Thayendanegea and that all would be well. Thayendanegea heard my talk. He said he owed a debt to you for taking a red path after Newberry. Thayendanegea's father was a Wolf. He calls me his little sister. I am his father's little sister——"

"That makes you Brant's aunt," I mused.

She glanced at me suspiciously, but my lean face was blank enough to save me a rebuke.

She haughtily concluded by saying—

"Captain Brant is a great man."

"He is a very great man," I readily admitted. "And I think he is now at the door."

I expected to see Sir John in his company. I hoped to be taken before a magistrate at once. I was disappointed to behold the chief entering alone.

However, I knew my rations of water would no longer be withheld and I was well content. Brant stepped to an inner door and called the sheriff by name and White soon joined us. Brant gave him a written message. The sheriff read it, his brows puckering. When he had finished he sullenly turned to me, and said—

"You are discharged on your own recognition. But be careful in the future, sir."

"I'll take great care to break his neck if he ever troubles my little friend again," I promised.

"If Mr. Whittlesey doesn't do as he says then I will do it," harshly spoke up Brant. "I have no liking for Bostonians, nor for Presbyterians; but tell your man Newberry to be careful."

The sheriff held his tongue and appeared to be relieved when we passed out the door. The street in front of the jail was well filled with farmers, tenants and Scotch-Highlanders, but there were no jeers and threats this time.

The fellow in the blacksmith's apron had no suggestions to offer. Brant surveyed them in silence for a few moments, his dark eyes darting over the crowd; then he lifted his stentorian voice and warned:

"This little woman carries the belts of Thayendanegea. She is of the Wolf clan

of the Senecas. I will take pay for any harm offered her as I would for a blood-sister."

No man answered him. Even the dour McDonald lowered his gaze and shuffled his big feet uneasily as the chief's gaze bored into him for a second. Then Brant added:

"This man Whittlesey saved a Mohawk child from drowning. He is called 'son' by the mother, a woman of the Wolf. He carries Thayendanegea's belts, as long as the Long House is open in friendship, from door to door to the people of this valley. *Na-hal*!"*

Ninety-nine per cent. of those present were in sympathy with Johnson Hall, and baleful glances were directed at me. Newberry was not present, doubtless having been warned of what was forward.

While none would take exceptions to Brant's words one man did speak up and inquired:

"What about old Whittlesey? Does Brant's wampum cover him? Is the old rat to keep on abusing His Gracious Majesty?"

Marcus Petry—ten of the name were to carry guns for the colonies—was one of the few present who did not hold with the Loyalists. Before either Brant or I could make answer, Petry was loudly calling back—

"Rat yourself, and worse!"

"You—Bostonian!" roared the other, roughly pushing his way toward Petry, who dropped his rifle and advanced to welcome the attack.

The crowd fell back, and the Johnstown man leaped violently forward. Petry ducked low and caught him by the legs and with a heave of his muscular body threw him over his head. The fellow struck on all fours and skinned his hands and nose.

Before the fight could be resumed Brant leaped between the men and pushed them apart, and with both hands pushed back those who would have assaulted Petry. Then wheeling on my friend he sternly commanded:

"You have no belts for Johnstown. Go away!"

I nodded my thanks to Petry, who hesitated a moment, then picked up his rifle and started down the street.

*"I have done," or "I have finished." Universally used by Iroquois in concluding speeches on all occasions.

Brant came back to me and in a low voice said:

"Too many bad belts here. Take the little woman of the Wolf clan and ride away at once. I'll go with you to your horses."

"We carry Thayendanegea's belts. No one will stop us," proudly spoke up Miss Nancy.

Brant smiled grimly and admitted:

"Not if they believed I would find it out; nor if I had talked in a Mohawk village. But in the woods, or in the dark? How can Thayendanegea tell who laughs at his road-belts. Get beyond the river."

So Miss Nancy and I rode back home together, thanks to the good offices of Captain Brant, greatest of the Mohawks.

And while we traveled as fast as the roads would permit until we had crossed the river, we then slowed our pace and took our time. We talked but little, for my young friend appeared to be deeply preoccupied.

At last I said—

"You did a very brave thing in coming to get me out of that cursed Loyalist trap."

"It's nothing," she murmured. "You are my brother. We are both of the Wolf."

"That is good talk, Little Sister. We will remember that. When I call and find you at odds with yourself I will remember I am your brother. And I shall speak very plainly as a brother should."

She nodded; then turned a sober little face up at me and informed me:

"We won't have many visits from you, and what scolding you do, you must do soon. We are going away."

This was very disagreeable news. Not to have the Martin home to visit would leave a blank space in my life.

"Is your father taking you to New York?" I asked.

"To Cherry Valley. A man he used to know, a Captain Robert Wells, has written him to come. Captain Wells worked for Sir William Johnson. Father got acquainted with him then."

I had never been to Cherry Valley, but I knew it was beautiful, and opened southwest to the Susquehanna, and was shut off from the Canajoharie Valley by a high ridge on the north. From travelers I had learned it was but twelve miles up the Canajoharie to this barrier.

Yet the execrable roads, the unbroken forests and, above all else, the troubled condition of the times, made me feel she and her

father were going out of my life as thoroughly as if moving to Philadelphia, or Charlestown. It saddened me. I glanced down at her profile and saw she was failing in her effort to wink back the tears.

To brighten her mood I enthusiastically declared:

"It's a wonderful country. You'll be very happy there. And, thank God! you'll be out of the path of danger that my uncle says will come to the Mohawk."

CHAPTER V

SHADOWS

THE winter of 1775 had little of pleasure that I can recall. Denied access to Mr. Martin's books I spent the days out of doors, wandering through the snow and doing some grown-up thinking. The evenings were occupied with helping my uncle in his steadily growing correspondence. The first three months of the year are a drab patch on my memory.

Then came April and a feverish pulse. News of the April fight reached us late in the month. War was a reality when once we heard the clumping hoofs of that express from Albany. In a twinkling life was upside down. Over the ruts and through the mud the word was brought.

To the edge of the grave my nerves will tingle whenever I recall that rider hammering at our door and loudly crying—

"Whole British army in Boston licked to —!"

Later intelligence reduced this wholesale claim, but the fact remained that the farmers—"Bostonians," was what the Loyalists and their red allies always called them—had routed the regulars, losing a little over a hundred men to the redcoats' nearly three hundred.

War was on before we could comprehend the stupendous fact. Whether busy plowing or walking alone under the shadowy pines I was ever hearing the rattle of drums, the staccato yelling of officers, and the reeling retreat from Lexington.

And there was born in my soul a fine martial spirit. I was eager to shoulder my double-barrel rifle to Boston Neck and show the Yankees how to shoot.

The capture of Ticonderoga by Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen and the fight at Bunker Hill afforded us more battle-cries.

Where had been hesitation and waiting was now a pell-mell rush of extraordinary events; and uncle and I often wrote the night through.

The attitude of the Johnsons changed and became less overbearing. Guy Johnson began fortifying Johnson Hall; and this act seemed to bear out my uncle's repeated assertion that I could remain in the valley and find a bellyfull of fighting.

Early in the year Colonel Johnson received orders from overseas to remove all dissenting ministers from the Six Nations; and he forthwith proceeded to hamper Samuel Kirkland in his missionary work among the Oneidas.

But prior to this our own Stockbridge Indians had endeavored to enlist the Mohawks' sympathy in the cause of the colonies. In fact, at the time I was saying good-by to the Martins in the late fall of 1774, efforts were being made by Whig and Tory to gain the League of the Iroquois as an ally.

Dr. Eleazer Wheelock wrote his old pupil, Joseph Brant, and was promptly informed that the writer could never forget the prayers he had learned at the Lebanon school, that they "should learn to fear God and honor the King."

The Committee of Safety held frequent meetings, the first for the year being early in May at Loucks' Inn in the Palatine district, when we endorsed the proceedings of the Continental Congress and voted to adhere to and abide by the same.

Four other meetings were held in that same fair month. The Albany committee was informed of the Johnsons' activities in dispersing patriotic gatherings with their armed dependents. Swivels posted at Johnson Hall were among the matters complained of; also the practice of the Loyalists in stopping and searching travelers from New England.

We urged upon the Albany committee to see that neither powder nor ammunition was allowed to come up the valley except as our committee advised, and then only to the shopkeepers we should name.

At the last meeting of that month we resolved that slaves and servants be not allowed to wander at night without the master's certificate specifying their business. In June the committee in a letter informed Guy Johnson it was unnecessary for him to keep himself surrounded by an armed force and that the stopping and

searching of travelers on the King's Highway was not relished.

The handful of settlers at Fort Stanwix petitioned the committee to garrison the fort, that the "gate ought to be shut." This was one of the earliest notes of Indian fear to be sounded.

In the middle of July the committee was informed by Ebenezer Cox that Guy Johnson had nine hundred Indians ready to sweep through the valley under the leadership of Brant.

Scouts were promptly sent out, up and down the valley. Especially was attention paid to the Little Falls country. Powder at twenty-five pounds per hundred weight and lead at forty shillings per hundred weight, were purchased in Albany by us.

By August the committee had taken over the civic government in the valley and had organized four battalions, one for each district. Among the individuals attracting attention by unwholesome language against the Whigs was William Johnson, the half-breed.

Aside from these frequent committee-meetings there was much other excitement. Men were leaving their work to congregate and talk. Expresses, mounted and afoot, were scurrying up and down the valley. Spy-guards were continually setting out for the Little Falls, the German Flats, Fort Stanwix and Kingsland; then they were returning and drawing us from our work with their recitals of suspicious signs found in the forest.

The monotony of the nights also was broken by the arrival of messengers from the east. Public opinion had crystalized against the Johnsons before the Lexington fight was thirty days old.

Late in May nearly two-score chiefs and fighting men from Oghwaga and other Susquehanna towns, joined with a delegation of Mohawks, and held a council with Colonel Johnson at Guy Park.

At this time Colonel John Butler—Connecticut born but long a dweller in our valley—was reported as commanding five hundred of Johnson's Highlanders. Nothing came of the meeting at Guy Park and the council adjourned to Cosby's Manor near the German Flats.

During the Summer this force moved on to Fort Stanwix. Little did we realize that Guy Johnson was working himself out of the country, that his powerful family was eliminating itself from Tryon County.

Could we have foreseen the hurried visits he was to pay the valley we would have laid aside all our affairs to stop his flight.

It was a momentous day when the express brought the news of Bunker Hill. Once the tidings of this battle reached Fort Stanwix, Colonel Johnson started for Canada by the way of Oswego, and took his Mohawks and Highlanders with him.

Among his red followers were many who, as boys, had played with me in great friendliness. Never were they to return to the places they and their fathers had loved except as they came on a red path. Never again were their council-fires to lighten the valley; nor were their festivals to be celebrated. They had for the last time in their ancient homes petitioned Hawenneyu with burning tobacco.

Did the smoke continue to rise for them it must be in an alien land. The beautiful names they had given to stream and hill and mountain were to be mouthed by another race. I can not believe that the Keepers of the Eastern Door, first to be named in a roll-call of the Six Nations, realized they were saying farewell to the wonderful valley when they fled with Guy Johnson to Canada.

And yet so strong did they keep the faith, I believe, that they would have sustained the covenant of their fathers with Great Britain even could they have foreseen it meant the going out of the Fifth Fire. The pity of it! And yet what white tribe ever more staunchly held to a chain of friendship?



JOSEPH BRANT remembered the prayers learned at the Lebanon school and went with Johnson to Montreal. Little Abraham, pacific by nature, remained at the Lower Mohawk Castle.

The other five nations were uneasy. They had no desire at the beginning of the trouble to engage in a bloody war. They were most anxious to have certain land-wrongs righted, but they professed an inability to understand why the white men should fight.

Thanks to Sir William's efforts as peacemaker the red hatchet between them and the Cherokees was deeply buried. For years they had abstained from inter-tribal wars. In the midst of this idyllic existence came the white men's quarrel.

They were bewildered when the Earl of

Dartmouth wrote to Colonel Johnson and stated it was the king's pleasure "that you lose no time in taking such steps as may induce them (the Six Nations) to take up the hatchet against His Majesty's rebellious subjects in America."

A month later General Philip Schuyler called a council of the Six Fires at the German Flats to offset any hostile move Colonel Johnson might make. The council was adjourned to Albany and was attended by five hundred warriors. I saw many of them as they passed down the valley. I greatly admired their stalwart figures and noble bearing.

Mr. Martin would have admired their ruffled shirts, their richly decorated leggings and moccasins, and their fine blankets, elegantly embroidered with wampum and trimmed with silver.

This council, while not representing the Six Nations as a unit, pledged with belts a strict neutrality. That the men present and speaking on wampum were sincere is proved by their standing aloof from the trouble until the fight on the Oriskany, when they suffered heavy losses.

The Summer and Fall of 1775 in our valley were filled with alarms and rumors and acts of violence. Governor Tryon fled from New York. One by one the colonies fell into line, announcing they were done with royal governments. The voice from each province became a martial drum-beat. Sir John remained at Johnson Hall and surrendered arms and ammunition. But he remained surrounded by his Highlanders; and there were groups of lawless men, loyal to no cause, ready to seize upon any occasion to pilfer and kill.

The probability of Guy Johnson's return was ever in our thoughts, and many a scouting party was sent out to watch for his coming by the way of the Oswego River and the Great Carrying Place at Fort Stanwix. Of false alarms there was no end.

Now I was finding work better to my liking and was discovering the days spent in the companionship of Mohawk boys was not wasted time. The farm was neglected that I might take to the forest and roam widely, always seeking some signs of Guy Johnson's coming. Other trips, and these were less desired, took me down the river.

One day I returned from Fort Hunter to find my uncle gone. The key was in the usual hiding place under a corner of the

door-stone, and on entering the house I found the big Bible in the middle of the table: a sign for me to look within at the Gospel of St. John. Opening the book I found a note that read:

gone up the Valley to catch long Gentry. may go as far as the little carrying place. Believe he is carrying a message from Sir J to G. Johnson. we must have it. Wait for me.—DAVID WHITTLESEY.



NOW Long Gentry was much forest-traveled and was not the man for my uncle to be trailing. Uncle David knew but one way of going about a piece of work: Straight and direct. He had not had the schooling received by playing with Mohawk boys in the deep forests. Until now there had been no occasion for him to take to the woods. In our local bickerings heads were often broken, and the Committee of Safety was frequently called upon to discipline some offender. And there were cases of highway robbery and assaults on outlying farmhouses, the work of evil-doers who cared nothing for King nor province.

In such bits of drama my uncle had played a stout part. But this pursuit of Long Gentry was a vastly different business. I knew the fellow only by reputation, as he had spent much of his time with the Indians at Unadilla as the result of an atrocious murder in Albany. Occasionally he was seen in Cherry Valley and the lower Schoharie. Once he was reported to have traversed the wilderness to the Hudson and to have shown himself in Catskill. But all such absences from the Unadilla river were infrequent and he tarried but briefly in any of the towns.

Many of the stories told about him were to be accepted as fables. Yet there must be some sort of a background even for fictitious history, and, unfortunately there was enough truth known about him to thoroughly damn him in the mind of any decent man.

The fellow was bad from hide to heart. He possessed great animal courage, was overbearing and insolent and ever ready for a physical encounter. He knew of only one way of fighting: To maim or kill.

His coming and going among the Susquehanna towns had not been interrupted. It seemed to be the disposition of Tryon County to leave him alone so long as he remained in the wilderness. It resulted that he enjoyed as much freedom as any of the New England missionaries, who occasionally

deplored his presence in some village.

Accepting my uncle's surmises to be true, it puzzled me how such a creature could venture to Johnson Hall and have speech with Sir John without the committee learning the fact. Also, how did my uncle know he was in the valley in the rôle of express between the hall and Canada? I had been absent several days and there was nothing in the writing to tell how long Uncle David had been gone.

Some one rapped on the door and stuffing the note in my pocket I opened and found Herbert Vischer, who sometimes traded a day's work with me.

"So you're back, Benajah. Ready to tend the stock?"

"That depends," I answered, stepping outside into the fading light. "My uncle is gone. When did he leave?"

"Three days ago. Came after me about noon. Seemed to be in a hustle."

"Did he say where he was bound for?"

"No. But he went up the river. Think he went on a spy-guard toward the German Flats. There's talk of keeping a guard at the Little Falls all the time to stop folks going up or down who look 'spicious. When that's done such scum as 'Injun' McFee can't go roaming where they will without giving an account of themselves."

"McFee! The forest-runner? Why do you name him?"

For my thoughts were on Long Gentry.

"Oh, for not much of nothing. Except we all know he's a bad one. He popped into my mind probably because he went by here the day after your uncle left."

"My friend, this is a very bad business. Milk the cows and take the milk home. Look after things till I get back. I'm going to find my uncle."

"I ain't got any powder, or I'd love to go with you," he regretted. "Not enough powder in the valley to give more'n one shoot to three hundred men."

"We'll soon have plenty of powder from Albany, and it won't be gobbled up by Johnson Hall, either," I assured him.

And I entered the house to get my blanket and a parcel of bread and cheese.

Vischer followed me and eagerly said:

"Benajah, I'll take my bush-sith and go with you. If I git within reach of a man with that sith I'll rip — out of him before you can spit."

"No, no," I said discouragingly. "You

look after the place. This is a one-man game. Did McFee talk with you?"

"If he'd opened his trap I'd 'a' smashed his face, the —— reprobate! That is, if he hadn't been carrying his rifle over his arm so's the muzzle always points at a body. When he's away from Johnson Hall he's saving of his speech."

It was rapidly growing dark and the air was chill. It was a year since the Martins went away and it was on such an evening as this that I had gone over to their place to say good-by. I had received from Nancy a polite little note, thoroughly white girl in wording and expression, but signed with a clear drawing of a wolf's head—Miss Nancy's clan-mark apparently.

I had delayed in answering it as chance messengers were scarce. And when one did unexpectedly show up I did not have time to write. Yet within six or seven months I had written. She did not reply. I assumed her father had wearied of Cherry Valley and had taken her and his broken fortunes to New York.

Only the growing excitement in the valley had kept me from following up the creek and crossing the ridge and visiting the Martins.

As I finished rolling my blanket and took note that Vischer had not forgotten to fill the cat's pan with milk I suddenly decided I would go to Cherry Valley as soon as my uncle was back home.

"Was McFee traveling fast, or just lazing along?" I asked as I locked the door and put the key under the stone.

"Going at a goodish pace, like he wanted to get somewhere."

"Have you seen anything of a very tall man, a stranger, passing up the valley?"

He shook his head.

"Have you heard any of the neighbors speak of Long Gentry passing by here?"

"No. If that —— shows up we'll kill him on sight. There's too much talk about Gentry for him to enter the valley without everyone knowing it."

I was of the same opinion and this doubled my bewilderment. For how could my uncle get the idea Gentry was to be found up the valley? Vischer broke in on my meditations, pleading:

"Benajah, I'd like mortal well to git father to do these chores so's I could trot along with you. Lor' sakes! But that's a master rifle. I'll wager it'll shoot most dingly."

"I shall travel fast and must go alone.

I don't know when I'll be back. I hope to meet my uncle returning."

"If that Long Gentry is round these parts I'm prayerful your uncle don't git caught wedged in between him and Injun McFee. But he's strong as an ox."

"He'll need to be as cunning and cruel as a weasel to escape either of those men," I bitterly declared, my heart sinking at his suggestion my uncle might be caught between the two men.

Then I was off, walking fast into the dusk; but even rapid travel could not drive the benumbing chill from my heart.

It was a new sensation, this worry because of Uncle David. No harm could come to him, even did he find Gentry, I kept telling myself. And each time I told it I would remember some of the ruthless acts of the man as preserved in border gossip, and would shiver with fear.

McFee alone I would not consider seriously. Yet he was a bad man. His type would never have been welcomed in Johnstown had not the turmoil in the county demanded messengers who could traverse the Iroquois Road from the head of the Mohawk to Oswego, and preferably one who had no ties to keep him in the valley.

Uncle David was on my mind all that early evening and as long as I sat before my fire. At times I fancied he was near me. Sleep came late, staved off by my worries.

I was up before the sun and eating bread and cheese. By scattered dwellings and through stretches of old growth I pressed on, always hoping to behold my uncle. It was not until I reached the Herkimer Mansion, two and a half miles below the Little Falls, that I got trace of him.

General Herkimer was away but his brother-in-law, Warner Dygert, was in the yard. I had been to his tavern at the foot of Fall Hill on the western boundary of our district and knew him well.

He greeted me warmly and urged me to enter the house, but something in my heart was driving me on. I quickly explained my business and even as I was talking his eyes dilated. When I finished he muttered—

"I don't like it."

"Has anyone seen him this far?" I asked, my voice coming thin and faint.

"One of the farm-hands saw and spoke to him. I thought it was queer he didn't

come up to the house to rest and eat. He got away before I knew he was in the neighborhood, or I would have gone after him. The man said he was making toward the Falls. That was two days ago."

"Has anyone seen Long Gentry hereabouts?"

"No. If he's up this way he passed in the night. More likely he's down at Unadilla."

"But you said you didn't like it?"

"Injun McFee passed here at a lope, twelve hours behind your uncle."

"Running! Then he was following a trail."

"Or traveling with a message."

The last gave me a bit of comfort although I did not believe McFee could be carrying any word for the patriots. Then I reasoned that he might be acting as express for the Johnstown Loyalists, and the old fears rushed back.

Dygert tried to encourage the belief the man was traveling afoot to escape attention. This was sound reasoning, as our committee was quick enough to halt a mounted suspect. Dygert offered to accompany me to the Falls and beyond, but I knew his place was at the house. The days when property could be left unguarded were passing away, and in remote sections already had departed.



TRAILING my rifle I swung into the old path, following the Great Iroquois Road which from prehistoric times had stretched from the Hudson to the lakes, and which, after Fort Stanwix was left behind, led through an unexplored country so far as white knowledge was concerned.

A few traders at times passed along the main trail and back, but they only moved by red favor and the road-belts of the various nations. Nor did they roam at will nor penetrate any distance north and south of the great trail. Perhaps there was no other red nation on the continent that had absolute control of so long a path.

In the lower valley the white man's horses and carts had broadened the ancient way, with deep ruts, into a rough thoroughfare we called a road. Even this trace of our long occupancy swiftly vanished once the German Flats were passed; and the few settlers living around Fort Stanwix faced primeval conditions. At Wood's Creek one plunged into the wilderness almost with a sweep of the paddle.

Walls of granite, gneiss and hornblende

confine the turbulent cascades known as the Little Falls. That formerly the river bed was much higher is shown by the deep holes worn into the surface of the hard rocks some sixty feet above the foam-streaked stream. Some of these openings were excellent hiding-places if one would risk tumbling into deep fissures.

One such cavity I had explored several years before. It was thirty feet above the trail and measured ten feet across the entrance. At the top was a long, square section of rock, exactly like the lintel of a doorway.

At the foot of a rocky promontory, where the gulf was a hundred feet deep and where the one-mile portage began, I halted and debated the wisdom of crossing to the north bank.

A Scotchman by the name of Ellis lived on the other side. He had received a patent to the wild gorge from Sir William, and he had a grinding-mill and sold flour to settlers in the German Flats. I did not know the man, and if I found him at home his political complexion might place him at odds with me. It was natural to assume that he thought as the Johnsons thought. My uncle would know and would not go near him if he be a Loyalist.

I finally decided to keep to the southern bank. The cascades tumbled down some fifty feet of rocky stairs and were hedged in so closely in places that it seemed as if a spry man could leap across. In other places the water was divided into several streams by irregular partitions of rock.

The deep pool was black in the shadow of the surrounding trees and the encircling hills. The desolation, the brawling of the waters, and the absence of the white man's humanizing influence, all worked to accentuate my despondent mood. I believed my uncle was somewhere ahead but of proof I had nothing.

I came to a boulder, recently detached from the wall and climbed over it.

The next moment I was treeing myself, and, with the double-barrel ready, was glaring about to locate the slayer of the sprawling bundle of clothes in the trail a dozen feet ahead.

I beheld only the mournful and desolate trees, and heard only the rush of the river. My Mohawk training unconsciously asserted itself, and by the time I had subdued the frantic pumping of my heart I knew the trail was

clear as far as I could see. The timber was scattered as only the most tenaciously rooted could survive in this chaos of rocks.

On the left stood almost perpendicular cliffs. On the right was the smother of falling water and the timbered north bank. With patience learned from my red playmates I waited many minutes, then glided to the tree close to the body.

For the first time I was beholding a man dead through violence. Again I waited, then reached out suddenly and pulled the figure over so I could see the face.

The clothing had told me it was not my uncle. Still I was greatly startled to recognize Injun McFee. He had been shot between the eyes. On the ground were half a dozen bullets he had been holding in his mouth when I reversed his position. His blouse was torn nearly to the belt in front; but surely he had never opened it thus violently after being shot.

That he had not been taken by surprise was proved by the bullets he was holding in his mouth when he was killed. With my eyes looking ahead I reached out and secured the rifle. It was empty. So at least there had been an exchange of shots and he had prepared himself for a fight to the death.

He had been standing behind the very tree I was hiding behind. He had fired his rifle at some one and the small bullet of his enemy had caught him squarely. With the muzzle of the gun I reached down and pushed back the blouse. An inside pocket was turned inside out. His slayer had been in a hurry to search him.

A hundred feet ahead the trail bent around a shoulder of rock. I used considerable time in making the bend, passing from tree to tree, and frequently pausing to scrutinize my back track. At first the horror of the tragedy benumbed me, but my woods-wits remained clear.

It was the same as if I were two men. One horrified, and one standing guard against a similar fate. I reached the turn and lying flat on the ground, suddenly poked my head around the rock and stared into the face of my dead uncle.

Then did my woodcraft desert me, and I was kneeling beside him and shaking him and calling him by name.

He was lying on his back but the bruise on his forehead told me he had fallen on his face. His face was more peaceful than I

ever had seen it since my aunt's death. It wore the expression of one who is satisfied. His rifle was empty and he had been killed while about to tamp home a bullet, for the bullet was on the ground and the stick was still clutched in his right hand.

But as the awful truth forced its way home, and I was permitted to reason a bit, I was behind a tree, staring up the trail and lusting to discover his murderer. For the mortal wound was in the back of his head, and Uncle David had neither seen nor heard his slayer; nor had he suspected the man who fired the fatal shot.

He had been engaged in a bush-duel with Injun McFee. McFee had fired at least once and had missed. My uncle had shot him down. Then, while in the act of reloading, he had been killed from behind.

When convinced the murderer had not tarried I placed my neckerchief over the placid face and in doing so observed the inside coat pocket was inside out.

It was in that pocket he carried a small book which contained the names of those men he was assigned to canvass and urge to join the committee. I proceeded to search the body careful, but the book was gone. Had it not been for this missing list I might have assumed it was murder followed by robbery. Now I was entertaining another possible solution; and the pocket of McFee's torn blouse suggested that he, too, had been searched.

Not yet capable of realizing my loss I scouted the trail and crossed the broken ridge. Across the river and north of the Ellis mill was a family or two at North German-town. Ahead was the little settlement of German Flats and the twenty miles of river bottoms forming the district of that

Mr. Martin and his books and young daughter, and runaway visits to the Mohawks' villages, were a million years behind me as I loped along to find a trace of the murderer.

I cleared the broken country surrounding the Falls before I saw a human being. A glance and my rifle was over my shoulder. The man was riding a fat horse and was approaching very leisurely. On beholding me he kicked his heels and pressed his mount into a clumsy gallop.

"I'm glad to see you, Benajah Whittlessey. You're too little up this way."

Then he noticed my rifle and cried:

"A new kind of a gun! If that contraption will shoot as neat as it looks it'll do some rare killing. Where did you get it? And what's your business up here? And how is your Uncle David?"

"John Demoth, I'm a sorry man this day," I sadly told him. "My uncle gave me the rifle. I came up here to find him. I have just found him back at the Falls — murdered!"

He slid, or fell, off the fat horse. His jaws worked for a few seconds before he could speak. Then he fairly exclaimed:

"My God! David Whittlesey murdered! Good David Whittlesey murdered!"

"So you see my business now is to find his murderer. And you must help me."

"Yes, yes, Benajah! We'll all turn out. There's ten of us Demoths on the Flats. Every man's sound as hickory, and a king-hater. I'll rouse them. We'll hunt with you!"

"Nay. The trail is one I must follow alone if I find it. But Uncle David must be taken back to the farm and buried. I can't go back now, or I'll lose my chance. The murderer can't be far from here."

"We'll bury your poor uncle. But how can you know his murderer is near? He may have passed you as you came up the valley."

"Have you seen a man called Long Gentry?"

Demoth scowled heavily.

"That we have. And we'd have used the rascal rough, if he hadn't talked soft and low. He passed along here two days ago."

"On horse or afoot?" I eagerly cried.

"Afoot, and alone."

"Give me a horse. Then bury my uncle. If I do not kill Long Gentry I shall not come back."

"There are ten of us. All sound men. Let some of us go with you," he insisted.

"The more we number the better his chances of escaping! I travel faster when alone. It takes but one bullet to kill him. I carry two in this rifle."

"But if he hides and shoots you——"

"Then I'll be with my uncle, and it'll be for some one else to send him to ——. Do I get the horse now? If I don't come back take one of ours."

"We'll go to the house. You're welcome to the horse, but to —— Long Gentry!"

"Aye. With all my heart. But a Whittlesey must send him there. Now for the horse!"

I started running for the low building a quarter of a mile up the road and Demoth's mount did well to keep within a rod of me.

Demoth was all for riding on and spreading the alarm so that kinsmen and neighbors might flock in to hear my story firsthand, when all they had to do was to visit the gorge and find the full story written there more vividly than I could ever tell it.

Long Gentry was hardened to forest travel, and if his errand was what I suspected I had no time to lose. So I insisted that Demoth bring out a horse at once.

He rode behind the barn and soon reappeared with a gaunt, rangy animal. I hurriedly muttered my thanks and mounted and set off up the valley. Voices called back and forth behind me, and I knew men were running from fields and barns to learn the news. I heard their cries of rage as Demoth told them of the murder. I knew they were setting off to find my poor uncle and carry him home. But I did not look back.



I MADE my camp between the river and the head of Egwagy Creek, the west branch of the Unadilla. Seventy-five years before, in Dongan's time, two white men penetrated this far into the Mohawk country. Unless I caught my man before he reached Wood Creek the chase would take me into country scarcely better known than was the head of the Egwagy in 1701.

I shot a deer and dressed it out, and cooked enough for two days' rations and hung the rest from a tree, a gift to the first white or red man who might pass, and picketed my horse in the grass by the bank of a rivulet. Then I settled down to face a very serious problem.

Was Long Gentry planning to make the Oswego River and travel through to Montreal? Or had he already turned south near my camping spot to follow down the Unadilla to the settlement of that name? Several families of Loyalists lived in complete harmony with the Indians at Unadilla.

My poor uncle had believed Gentry was acting as express, whereas it might have been Injun McFee. Of one fact I was positive, Gentry had not penetrated the valley below the Little Falls. But he had been at the Falls. It was no chance that brought him to the gorge while McFee was shooting at my uncle.

If he turned south he would be carrying

no message to Guy Johnson. If he were making for Unadilla I could take my time in hunting him down. My original plan held good: I would make all haste to the Great Carrying Place and learn if he had passed there. Some of the few settlers would have seen him, for being at the edge of white cabins he would not hesitate to enter and demand food.

I was used to the silent companionship of the forest and the star-speckled sky was ever a welcome roof. But this night I was hungry for the company of men. For the first time in my life I was experiencing that sense of loneliness that overwhelms. My dear benefactor had left me!

Now that I had halted the pursuit, my overstrained nerves gave way. I was compelled to fight to hold myself from running wildly through the dark woods. It was all so purposeless, so cruel.

The morning brought a glorious sun but there was nothing but shadows for me. I ate because I must keep up my strength. I hoped to find some trace of Gentry at the mills at the mouth of Oriskany Creek. He could not suspect he was being pursued, and with the last settler's cabin so near he would not practise stealth.

I kept the horse at a gallop until I had covered half the distance to the creek when I halted to examine the ashes of a camp-fire. Whoever had lighted it had amused himself by whittling a piece of pine, torn from the stump that had furnished his kindlings. Long shavings proved the whittling had continued after the fire was blazing.

This was no red man's way of whiling away the time. Pawing over the litter of shavings I found a neatly carved model of a long rifle, some six inches in length, and an attempt at an English hatchet. But the latter was more crudely done and abandoned with the head half-finished.

There had been no rain for a week and the ashes afforded no clue as to the age of the fire. However, it was something to know a white man was ahead of me, traveling west. I believed him to be Gentry; and, mounting my horse, I renewed the chase.

A man by the name of Van Slyck came up before I could dismount and asked me to enter his cabin and tell him the news of the lower valley.

I swung to the ground and explained:

"I will leave my horse here. Rather,

he belongs to John Demoth at the Flats. If I don't come back see he is returned."

"There's much behind your words I'd be keen to know," slowly said Van Slyck, and his gaze was very searching.

"I know who you are from my uncle, David Whittlesey."

His face lighted up and he cried:

"David Whittlesey's word is enough for me in anything. You're his nephew."

"I am Benajah Whittlesey. My uncle was murdered three days ago at the Little Falls. I'm hunting the man who killed him."

"Oh, lord! What times! What times! Poor David Whittlesey dead! Murdered!"

"I believe the man I want is Long Gentry. Do you know him?"

"Long Gentry? Who hasn't heard of him! To think he may have been under my roof! Why, within twenty-four hours a lean-favored man stopped here for food and some rum. His face should fetch him a halter.

"A very tall man and dressed much like an Injun, but a white man. He looked very evil when I refused to let him carry away the rum jug. I do believe he would have tried to do me mischief if several of the men hadn't been here."

"You have entertained the foulest scoundrel unhung," I bitterly cried. "See that Demoth gets the horse back if I don't return."

"Wait till I call the men together! David Whittlesey of the Committee of Safety dead! God help us in these bad times! Some of the boys must go with you."

"Let no one follow me," I insisted. "I believe Long Gentry is the man I hunt. I can make sure when I find him. He had that which he will not throw away, something he took from my poor uncle's dead body."

"He carried no gear, either stolen or his own," declared Van Slyck. "So perhaps you are wrong. Only his rifle and a worn blanket. He ate like a wolf and drank much of my rum, but talked none. He would look over a little black book, and drink and gobble victuals. If not for the book, I would have said he was a beast."

"The book!" I cried. "By —! That does settle it! Man, that book was my uncle's record of settlers he was to ask to join our committee. Mayhap your name was down there. Gentry carries that book to Canada, if I don't stop him. If he gets through, a red ax will be drawn opposite

each name, and when Guy Johnson returns——"

"Merciful Father!" gasped Van Slyck, his weathered face working convulsively "I'll move down the valley even though it costs me the mill."

But without waiting for him to speak further, I ran up the river-bank and through a grove of beech. Squirrels chattered and scolded, and the dead leaves rustled smartly under my moccasins.

Although knowing Gentry must be far ahead I was glad to be clear of the grove and treading the silent floor under the evergreens. I found no trace of my man until within a mile of Fort Stanwix, when I called at a cabin. The door slammed in my face and a gun-barrel slid through a loophole, and a woman's voice was warning:

"Turn back, or I'll fire. There's no more rum for you here. You faced down my man, but you can't face me down! You've larned that once."

I gave her my name and residence, and requested her to take a look at me through the small opening under the eaves.

The gun was partly withdrawn and I knew she was climbing up to the hole that served for a window. I glimpsed her face for a moment, and then she was back on the floor and opening the door and explaining:

"You're not him. T'other one was like some wild animal. He ordered us round, and carried away what liquor we had and a h'unch of prime deer meat."

"Tall man, spare built," I suggested.

"Very tall and thin, and a very wicked face."

"When was he here?"

"First time was yesterday morning. Come back this morning after more drink, but I had the door locked and the gun on him. He talked something dretful. Said he'd come back. I was glad my man started early for the Grant."



THIS was amazing good news. It was plain Gentry had halted his journey to enjoy the stolen liquor and that the morning found him craving more drink. I told the woman:

"Keep your door barred. If you see him again shoot on sight. He is a murderer."

"You are hunting for him?" she whispered.

I nodded and turned away. Her voice called after me—

"I'll pray mortal hard that you give him his needings."

I swung southwest on leaving the little clearing, planning to avoid the fort and gain Wood Creek. I entered a cedar-swamp within half a mile of the fort and took a path that led in the desired direction.

When nearly clear of this marshy tract I found myself staring at a long rifle-barrel aiming at me from a clump of bushes. The man behind the gun was completely hidden. His voice called out:

"Who are you?"

"A traveler bound for Oswego," I replied, managing to control my voice.

"You'll go flukin' to —— in a minute if you ain't careful. What's your name?"

"Richard Claus," I improvised.

For half a minute there was silence, the rifle-barrel remaining motionless. Then the muzzle wavered a bit and the unseen was asking—

"Connection of Dan'l Claus?"

If he were familiar with the family history of Sir John's brother-in-law he would know I was lying; but believing I had found Long Gentry and was in imminent danger of being murdered I was forced to take the risk.

"His nephew," I answered.

Another nerve-racking period of silence, with me expecting each heart-beat would be my last. The gruff voice was saying:

"You may be what you say, and you mayn't. Drop that new-fangled gun! If you're all right you'll have it back. If you ain't all right you'll never need it again."

I dropped my rifle and demanded:

"Step out! Let me see who dares to treat a Claus in this fashion. If you're a rebel, say so."

A chuckle answered me. Then the bushes parted, and a very tall man, fully six and a half feet, was gliding from cover like a snake. He motioned me back, and, as I gave ground, he reached down a long arm without shifting the muzzle of his gun and picked up my rifle.

There was something of the ape and snake in his movements. He wore overalls of some coarse stuff and a dirty hunting shirt. In the front of his belt was thrust a long pistol, and at the back, after the Iroquois manner, he carried a tomahawk. His rifle was a long singleshot and the stock was much scratched and scarred. His eyes were small as an Indian's and as

bright as a weasel's. He could scarcely keep watch over me, so impatient was he to examine my gun.

"Got any rum?" he hungrily demanded. I shook my head and asked—

"Who are you?"

"Gentry's as good a name as another," he snapped back.

Now that I had found him I was surprised to discover I had no fear of him.

"I've heard my uncle speak of a Long Gentry, devoted to the Loyalists," I remarked. "If you're he this is a sorry way to treat me."

With an ugly grin he replied:

"I'm willing to serve Loyalists. But I ain't so hide-bound that I'll serve anyone better'n I'll serve Long Gentry."

And without removing his sharp gaze from me, he continued fondling my rifle.

"A man's a fool who doesn't look out for himself," I agreed. "But a man serves himself best who serves the king these days."

"Bah! What do I care who wins this rumpus? Long Gentry can live his life out no matter who gits licked. Where's king's men or Whigs that can come out here and bother me? Show me a profit, and I'll serve till there ain't no profit. Then I'll dicker with t'other side."

"Then make a profit out of me. I must make Oswego, where I can take a boat to Canada. I'm to have a commission as soon as I reach Montreal. Guide me to Oswego and you can have my rifle."

"Thought I had that already," he cunningly told me.

"I carry no money, but guide me to Oswego and keep on with me to Montreal and you shall have ten pounds, king's money."

"Why, now I'm thinking we can strike a bargain. I have business at Oswego. Mebbe in Canada. If a man ain't waiting there to take what I'm carrying I'm s'posed to go way through."

"Then let's get out of this infernal swamp and camp and eat. I've been hard pressed ever since I quit the river at Canajoharie and swung south to keep clear of the Committee of Safety's men."

"But you swung back to the river again."

"Made it by the way of Egwagy Creek. They've got men posted at the Little Falls to question all travelers."

He chuckled at this, and inquired:

"But you must 'a' met folks. What are they talking about?"

"Two Dutchmen called on me to halt on the Oriskany and I ran for it. It's ten days since I've heard any news."

Gentry craned his long neck and rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and his eyes contracted to points. I think he was deliberating whether it would pay more to let me live, or whether he would save bother by taking my life on the spot.

Doubtless my alleged connection with the Claus family, and, through it, the powerful Johnson family, tipped the balance. Even then his suspicious nature would not permit him to take any chances.

"All right," he finally decided. "Just follow the path. There's a canoe on Wood Creek a mile 'n' a half from here. We'll eat and think it over. Mebbe we'll start soon. Mebbe we'll wait till to-morrer. Creek's pretty well tangled up with brush 'n' logs, and we'll need good light."

"Then again I'm mortal keen for another snort of rum before I start out. I'm thinking I can scare up some."

And his eyes rolled toward the cabin where he had obtained one supply.

"Brush or no brush, I'm in a hurry to make Oswego and reach Montreal. There's plenty of rum ahead."

"Never pays to hurry. We'll talk it over. I ain't been in the valley much for years. Lived in Albany once."

And he gave me a quick glance as if to see if my expression changed and gave evidence that I was familiar with his bloody record in that town.

"All my people have left the valley. But they'll return."

"Sir John ain't left?" he quickly reminded.

"Not yet. He bides his time."

 HE MOTIONED for me to start along the path, and at every step of the way I expected to feel his ax in the back of my head. The portage for canoes between Fort Stanwix and the creek was a mile—a little more in extremely low water.

For bateaux it was necessary to make a carry of six or eight miles. Gentry had his canoe below the stockade called Fort Newport. We passed in sight of this stockade, built in about 1756, when the carrying place was of great strategic importance and controlled the western end of the Mohawk valley.

When we came to the canoe, drawn up on the bank, Gentry ranged along beside me and gestured for me to sit down.

He remained standing, his peculiar eyes dilating and contracting, as he stared at me intently. My rifle rested against a tree behind him. His own gun was cradled in his left arm and held me covered. Suddenly he demanded:

"What do you mean about not having any money? Men don't travel to Canada without money. And I mean hard money. None of that — New York currency."

"Men leaving the valley on the jump as I did can't stop to get money," I replied. "There's plenty waiting for me in Canada. Colonel Guy Johnson will be my banker for all I want."

"Turn out your pockets! There's mighty little hard money for Long Gentry in this country or in Canada."

"You're welcome to what I happen to have," I told him; and I emptied my pockets of a few shillings. "See me through to Montreal and you shall have twenty pounds instead of ten."

He licked his lips hungrily, but suggested:

"You might change your mind. It's a long trail from here to Oswego. Mebbe I'm a fool to start on it. It's a longer trail to Montreal."

"Curse it, man! Have done with boy's talk. You want money. I want to get to Canada. Oblige me and I'll pay you well, and put you in the way of earning more. If you won't oblige me then I must go alone."

"Not so fast. If you try it alone you'll get a red ax stuck deep in your head. You wouldn't be able to shoot game, even. For I'm going to keep your rifle."

I was now convinced the monster had decided to kill me, and I was frantically striving to plan some move to circumvent him, when he abruptly asked—

"You read writing?"

I nodded my head, not daring to trust my voice. Stepping back a few feet, he fished out the small black book I so often had seen my uncle write in. He tossed it to me saying:

"Begin at the first and read what it says. I may want to sell it. I must git a notion what it's worth."

With my temples pounding as if to split I opened the little volume and stared at the angular handwriting of my poor uncle.

"Read it," impatiently commanded Gentry, sitting on my right with his rifle across his knees.

My uncle had commenced at the back of the book in keeping his memoranda and the first page of writing contained a list of those present at the last meeting of the committee, held at the house of Gose Van Alstyne, the inn-keeper and miller on Scrembling Kill—as our Canajoharie creek was then called.

The Mohawk district was listed first, and I read off, "John Marlatt," "Volkert Vedder," "Frederick Fisher," and so until I had finished that district. And as I read, taking my time and pretending to have some difficulty in deciphering the writing, I managed to watch from the corner of my eye the menacing rifle-muzzle.

"Go on!" growled Gentry. "Nothing but a — parcel of rebels that every one knows is a rebel."

I began the list of those from the Palatine district, and again pretended to have trouble. Each time I would pause and screw up my eyes Gentry, although unable to read, would lean forward to behold what was bothering me.

"'Anthony V. Fechten,' 'John Frey,' 'Isaac Paris,'" I slowly called off; then came to a halt and scowled savagely.

"Go on!"

Lifting my head and staring him squarely in the face I declared—

"I'll defy anyone to make out what that means." And I tapped the plainly written name of "George Eckert"—and waited.

Unconsciously off his guard for a second, he again leaned forward, only farther this time, and bent his head closely to examine the stubborn writing.

The position of the rifle was shifted a trifle, and I struck the muzzle aside and with the same motion drove my left arm around his waist, while my right hand closed on the haft of the long knife in his belt.

Never have I heard such a scream from the lips of man, red or white, as he sounded when he realized I had tricked him. There was nothing human in it. It was so diabolical and bestial that my nerves would have been sadly shaken if not for the memory of what the beast had done to my uncle.

And as quick as any of the cat-tribe did he react the moment my arm touched him.

He lunged forward, and we commenced rolling over and over, whirling with a rapidity that prevented me from righting myself. And only by keeping my head plastered against the side of his head did I escape being torn by his teeth.

His strange animal whimperings were interspersed with fearful screams as we bumped and bounded along the bank. I maintained my grip on his knife, and my left arm tightened around his waist.

Our dizzy revolutions destroyed my sense of direction. It was a blind whirl, a terrible confusion, that left only two thoughts in my mind: To keep my head away from his gnashing teeth and to stab him with his own knife. That he believed I had a tremendous advantage and was willing to take any risk to deprive me of it was soon shown when for a second we remained motionless.

He was on top and could see what he was doing. So I know he acted deliberately, not blindly, when he lurched down the bank, carrying me with him, and into the sluggish water.

Luckily I filled my lungs as we took the water. Down we sank, with him still on top, his long legs twining about me like horrible serpents. He tried to push me away from him. And as he pushed I suddenly assisted him by releasing my hold.

One knee came down on my chest, but I had caught the front of his hunting shirt, and just as it seemed my lungs must burst I drew back my right hand and drove the long knife to the hilt in his venomous body. He tried to scream and filled his lungs with water.

I managed to kick clear of him and, still holding the knife, rise to the surface. The water could not have been more than eight feet deep where we had fought, and a stroke toward the bank restored my footing. I stood there waist-deep, panting for breath, when a voice on the bank exclaimed:

"Our Lady save us! —! What is it?"

Throwing back my long hair and wiping the water from my eyes, I stared up at the man and recognized him as Peter Bolduc, the ginseng trader. His mouth was open and his eyes were protruding.

I clawed my way up the bank, still carrying the long knife, and crawled toward the trader. He fell back, his face convulsed with horror. Then he recognized me and bleated:

"Pity and save us! But *M'sieur Whittlesey!* It is impossible!"

I seized a scrub-bush and pulled myself to my feet and filled and emptied my lungs to feed strength to my legs.

"But *M'sieur Whittlesey!* Name of a fish! I, Peter Bolduc, of good family, ginseng trader, implore you to speak! To tell me it is not an evil dream!"

"I am your true friend, Benajah Whittlesey," I hoarsely whispered.

"Name of the —! But it is not real! I, Peter Bolduc, come to a stream. He hears noises like the monster turtles of the Iroquois fighting under water! Behold! He sees the water boil. He sees the backs of strange things! Then, silence. Then an arm with a knife. Then *you!*"

I plunged back into the muddy water and groped about until I found Gentry. As I dragged the long form ashore the Frenchman went into another paroxysm, and screamed:

"For the love of the good God! Bring forth no more, *m'sieur!*"

I drew Long Gentry half-up the bank and left him.

"—! What have you done, *m'sieur?*" gasped the Frenchman.

"Peter Bolduc, in fair fight I've killed the beast who murdered David Whittlesey, my uncle," I panted.

CHAPTER VI

AT UNADILLA

BOLDUC stared at Gentry but did not offer to help drag the limp form up the bank. When I drew the hatchet from the dead man's belt and began hacking the soil the trader was quick to lend a hand, however, and with ax and long knife did more than his part in digging the grave.

Then came the disagreeable business of searching the sodden clothes; for I must have what I believed Gentry had taken from Injun McFee's blouse, the message McFee had brought to the Little Falls to speed on its way to Canada.

I found it sealed in oil silk. Stuffing it in the bosom of my shirt I nodded for Bolduc to help finish the gruesome work.

Very gingerly he took the dead man by the heels and we placed him in his grave. Very energetically he restored the dirt and rounded off the long mound. There was

no Christian sentiment about the task. If not for polluting the clean air Long Gentry could have remained above ground as long as I hoped he would roast for his atrocious crimes.

And now the trader took time to cry out:

"*M'sieur!* They will add *Goragh* to your name and call you great! —! Such an ensemble!"

"There is a small book——"

"Behold! I picked it up by the tree."

I pocketed the book and recovered my rifle. I would have thrown Gentry's gun into the creek, but the trader remonstrated:

"It is property. It has a value. Property can not murder, nor steal. It is not

worth much, but I will buy it of *m'sieur*."

"It's yours for the taking."

And I sat down and opened the oiled-silk package and took out a sheet of folded paper. Opening it, I stared helplessly at the contents. I beheld:

xx1910# 8E 67+1198

6dx*x077 #77x+V #777-8

x18p 8x5 x a 76 66E4

90x#1777-10

"*M'sieur* finds bad reading?" politely asked Bolduc.

TO BE CONTINUED

HIT YOUR OWN GAIT

by Raymond S. Spears

IMITATING the other fellow is generally a poor way to develop one's own personality. I have noticed that those who have the most fun in this world, from the view-point of outdoor experience, are those who go their own gait and seek their own sport. What's the use of following the others, when the end sought is one's own recreation? Defer to one's pal, of course; let the family vote on the subject; but if one would have more fun catching catfish, why travel with the casters of dry flies for trout? If one would rather camp down by a grassy little marsh, full of mosquitoes, why go swelling around the municipal camp ground?

Some of us old-timers are likely to lay the law down thus-and-so to the youngsters. Shoo-fly! We did mostly as we durned pleased, and so why not you? The opportunities for trail-blazing in experience were never so numerous as at the present time. It is just as feasible to go forth with only an extra sock now, as ever in history. Also, why carry grub you don't like very well

because it's in a special list for "tourists and campers," when the same weight in something nobody ever thought to take on the road would taste a lot better, and perhaps go a lot further?

People who hate to think can find plenty of ready-made equipments listed and priced to suit. But when the whole outdoor experience is delightful, full of zest and vigor, because out there one "does as he pleases", why start handicapped by going in the way, on the road, with the outfit, and according to rules and regulations of somebody else—when one would so much rather go according to one's own notions? Know the other fellow's ideas, methods, reasons—but go your own gait!

Habits are bad enough, if they are bad. My idea of the worst habit in the world is falling into some one else's bad habit, when one would so much rather develop a good habit of own's own, but is afraid to because nobody else does things in the way that, probably, is a gift of inspiration to a heart and soul that doesn't know it! Seek your own gait, to keep it!



X-35, Charge' d'Affaires

by GERALD HUNTOON

Author of "Griggsey Helps Out."

THIS is the disgraceful history of a violent and unwarranted breach of all the tenets and principles of international law—the confession of a clear case of piracy perpetrated by the first line of defense of the United States.

About the first contributory factor was the guilty, scarlet-faced shame of the submarine X-35. For home port, she claimed Panama and at that time she lay, all alone, beside a huge concrete dock, like a whipped puppy in a large empty cellar.

Too inefficient to take part in the Fleet's war game off Cuba! Too slow and haphazard in diving, too weak in torpedo firing, to be trusted in her part of the maneuvers!

Was it any wonder that little old Jenks, her leading chief petty officer, stood white-faced before his rows of gleaming valves and gauges and cursed till his eyes watered? Was it surprising that the twenty-odd green boys, foisted upon the X-35 as a crew, stood about in dumb little clumps of misery? Or that they furtively avoided the eye of their long, lean young skipper on his listless inspection trips?

Still, it was not their fault, and they very soon divined that they were unblamed. Never a word of censure or disgust did Lieutenant "Johnny" Saunders let out.

But the injustice of it all was what kept him aloof from the sympathy of the Base

officers. How can a submarine boat be made into a virtual porpoise right after an unthinking bureau two thousand miles away has transferred your best men and given you children in return who don't know an air-compressor from a main ballast-tank?

Johnny didn't know the answer. But at night, after disheartening days of suddenly finding his boat on the bottom after an order to come to the surface, he decided to ask the Haig Brothers and Lady Cognac for advice.

A lamentable decision, for the advice given was to go on a party and forget it.

The liquid stock of the various Colon clubs visibly dwindled; the taxi drivers jumped if suddenly spoken to; the Colon police grumbled; the club stewards swore; the greens committee of the golf club vowed to have the blood of the idiots who played automobile polo on the fifth green at 4 A.M.

True, the X-35 still went out every morning to have her battle with the congenital boneheadedness of some twenty young men, but scandals, like sores, develop quickly and thoroughly in the tropics. The gossips of Panama hadn't gone to war maneuvers. Rumors at last reached even the admiral of the Panama district, which brings us to the second factor regarding international law.

The admiral, at that time, was sitting up nights watching the preliminary warlike rooster-hops of two fairly large Latin

republics down the coast. A worked-to-death radio force was pouring conflicting messages into the admiral's lap. First one from the distracted commander of an American destroyer watching the gathering of the clans in Santa Blanca and Cordova; then one from the observers of the sweet oily speeches of the rival diplomats in session at the Pan-American Building, Washington, D. C.

Large fruit companies were screaming "war"; Dutch courage was being absorbed in hogsheads by the rival armies, boundaries never even glimpsed through the jungle were being coiled and twisted across a mahogany table. Over all, a presidential aspirant in Santa Blanca, the *almirante* of her navy, was waving the flag and clamoring that their really powerful cruiser, the *Monacas*, must go down the coast and sweep the seas of Cordovan gunboats.

Without exaggeration, it has been stated that in Panama an elderly and somewhat dyspeptic admiral, denied by duty of a rancorous game of golf, is not a thing of beauty nor a particularly merry tribunal of justice to encounter early in the morning. Rumors are compelling evidence. Hence, young Lieutenant Saunders appeared "on the carpet," somewhat like an aspen-tree from the previous night and far shakier from the past ten minutes' monologue.

The tirade paused with a final wrench. The admiral pondered. He thought of punishment. The admiral hated submarines. Their oil- and gas-reeking bowels disgusted him, brought up from his youth on spotless white quarterdecks. The thought of an indefinitely long slimy cruise in one of the things, filled with the unceasing roar of the Diesel engines, murky with fumes and smells of damp food, wet clothes, grease and sweat, almost sickened him. Likewise, he thought of the work thrown on a young skipper's shoulders when he has no second officer. The X-35 had none.

A gray glare fastened on Johnny's face.

"And now, you mud-wallowin' young—young—reprobate!" bellowed the old man, "is that tin-can of yours in running condition?"

"Yes, sir," very meekly.

"Very well, then. You'll receive written movement-orders as you go out. Proceed with the X-35 to the Santa Blancan coast, report to Commander Macdonald of the destroyer *Jefferson* and see if you can do what

he orders without blundering. That's all!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

The door opened and closed almost before the Marine orderly outside could straighten his face. But the admiral's psychology had been almost poor enough to have been German. Johnny nearly laughed in the face of the aide who dolefully handed him his orders.

"Oh, boy! Out of this — hole and goin' to see some fun!"

He grinned for the first time in two weeks when once clear of the office. Of course he had no "second," but he had managed before. He hurried as he thought of good old Jenks' joy at getting a cruise to "shake down" the boat and manufacture a crew. It was worth an hour's cussing-out to see that worthy's face.

"Cap'n," said he, "the god of boneheads is with us. Why you can't tell! Them spigs might fix it up so's we'd have a scrap, ourselves!"

He turned and descended on his minions with a roar.

"Come on, you mother's lambs! Rig ship for sea. You're goin' on a personal conducted "tower," and the Skipper's got his grin back!

"Johnson, tell that cook if he brings any rotten chow on this trip, I'll have him chasin' tadpoles out of the torpedo-tubes!"



UNDER the shock of the X-35's recovered spirits, the Base Force sped the boat on her way. Jenks, his very mustache standing on end forced a phenomenal speed in loading stores. By noon, the submarine was backing clear of her dock; at four that afternoon, she was passing the chattering drills near Culebra Cut.

Johnny sat on the periscope housing and drummed his heels on the side as a fresh breeze from the Pacific sent spray over the low deck. Jenks grinned understandingly and hummed his one lugubrious love song. Even the disgruntled X-35 shook herself into content as she followed the tropic dusk to sea, the pincushion of arc lights on Ancon Hill slowly fading to a blur. Followed several days, while a submarine climbed in its own wet bunglesome fashion over endless processions of long Pacific swells; while an admiral at Panama slowly drove his radio force insane; while one dignified Latin-American diplomat relayed another in the marathon of words towards the goal of a treaty;

and, finally, while an aforementioned flag-waving patriot gathered more and more jingoes of Santa Blanca to his cause.

This last development it was which brought to John Saunders another bad session with a crotchety senior. Crotchety seniors in the Navy seem to attempt to make up for their extreme scarcity by an unsurpassed thoroughness.

On the lazy, haze-tinged morning that brought the mountains of Santa Blanca into view, the X-35 met the destroyer *Jefferson* headed at full speed in the opposite direction. Fluttering signal pennants brought the two vessels hove-to, close aboard, bobbing like two gossiping old ladies in rocking-chairs. Another wisp of bunting followed by a cockle-shell of a motor boat brought Johnny to Commander Macdonald's cabin.

It was immediately evident that if a crisis came in South American history it would be all the submarine's fault.

"What on earth is the admiral thinking of?" demanded Macdonald, irritably. "Here come orders for me to return to Panama to pick him up. He's decided to observe things personally—and to do that, he leaves a young boy here alone just when that blood-thirsty Santa Blanca has broken loose!"

"Yes, sir," cheerfully.

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir! What do you mean 'Yes, sir?' What good is an idiotic submarine here. Look at this!"

"This" was indeed a large spoonful of trouble. The jingoes of Santa Blanca had, the night before, gained sufficient strength to ignore their *presidente* and order their eager navy to sea. The cruiser *Monacas* was to hurry to the Cordovan coast where her actions "were to be governed by circumstances."

"In other words," interjected the commander, "she's to bombard the Cordovan towns to dust-heaps unless Uncle Sam can stop it. And every tenth cousin of an American in Cordova is yelling for protection of interests!"

"Well, young man, I guess you're due to hold the sack. Here's your death warrant. Get back to your boat and obey those orders. Our friend is going to take the *Monacas* to sea tomorrow morning!"

Johnny went. Once more prediction of his reactions had failed. He read his "death warrant" fifty times before he swung precariously from the motor dory to his own

guttering deck. It was dated March fourteenth from Panama.

Prevent by any possible diplomatic methods Santa Blanca Cruiser *Monacas* from reaching Cordova before March twenty-fourth. Washington promises treaty before then.

Ten days!

The destroyer spun around, leaped ahead in a splutter of foam and faded towards Panama. The X-35 sat in her wash and gurgled.

Captain Saunders, squatting cross-legged on the bridge, luxuriously wiped his mouth free of coffee and read the decoded messages aloud to old Jenks.

"Note the 'any possible diplomatic methods,' Jenks," he concluded. "Any possible methods! Oh, man!"

"Cap'n," replied the privileged one, "I've seen some surprized spiggoties in my time but nothin' to what we're going to see."

"Well, we'll see. Tell 'em below to send up that big chart of the coast. We shall now ruminate, Jenks, upon the problem of preventing a foreign ship ten times our size from going her own sweet way—by diplomatic methods."

The home port of the Santa Blanca navy is ten miles in from the coastline, at the end of a narrow, deep and very winding fiord. A close, rankly odorous jungle growth throttled this approach into a green tunnel of stillness, broken only twice by deserted log booms marking a desultory mahogany trade.

Vague thoughts of Hobson bottling up the Spanish fleet chased through Johnny's brain as late that afternoon the X-35 nosed her way gingerly, submerged, into the harbor. Only its one eye showing, the submarine crept along, the periscope under Johnny's nervous guidance sweeping every inch of the shore line. So slowly they crept that the sunlight was leaving the dim valleys ahead before a last desperate twist of the channel revealed the dark bulk of the *Monacas*.

Here the submarine halted a little while, as if awed by the task ahead; then sank with a subdued hiss to the bottom to wait for darkness.

"Patterson, you watch the gages. Jenks, bring that radio man in here—and the international code book. Got to hatch a little message that the spigs will prick their ears at."

Proceeded a discussion at which the crew

could only guess from their captain's frequent whoops of joy. Jenks, it must be said, was the ideal submarine leading chief—as full of resources as Gatun Lake is of dead trees. Before supper was over the conference ended, and the campaign opened at eight o'clock when the X-35 heaved herself dripping and puffing to the surface.

The conspirators had rejected without question the possibility of any official intercourse. That huge, hungry cruiser must be stopped by trickery; as many tricks as possible to the square minute. Likewise, the X-35 must not be seen!

A dark night and the canal-like contour of the bay permitted the submarine to stick her nose right into the protruding roots of the jungle.

"Remember, Jenks, don't you show your face!" were the captain's last instructions. "Just tend to your job of getting those hawsers!"

"And Juan!" to the Porto Rican mess attendant, now arrayed like the lilies in the skipper's palm beach suit. "Don't be too conspicuous! Don't spend any money on the civilians! Get next to every uniform you see from the *Monacas* and get it drunk—blind drunk. And be sure to rejoin the boat some way at four in the morning!"

The two men nodded, slipped off the bridge and ashore. The boat backed off quietly to await her cue.



THE capital of Santa Blanca was in an uproar over the impending expedition. The navy was out in force proclaiming to a world of admiring beauties that the *Monacas* was perfectly capable of devouring six battleships before breakfast. Bonfires roared and steamed with dank wood, machine-gun streams of Spanish expletive poured from every quarter, the *almirante*, who commanded the expedition himself, made one wildly applauded speech after another.

The party grew steadily wilder. Juan flitting from group to group with his ever-ready smile and bottle, was scarcely needed. Jenks rather envied him in his easy role as he stumbled soaking wet along the marshy water-front. Midnight came and with it the first "diplomacy" of the X-35. Let it suffice to say that the *Monacas* was moored, bow and stern, in her awkwardly tiny harbor to piles along the shore. On the bow hawsers labored the submarine, on the stern

our friend Jenks and strange stretching and slackening developed in those mooring lines.

Gently, it was done. Even when the first freshening of the breeze before dawn swung the cruiser's bow around like a weather-vane, the sleepy "happy-men" left on board were perfectly oblivious. The outboard hawsers actually curled and kinked in their slackness. The X-35 coughed gently to herself and headed down-stream. Ashore, Juan gave a last look at the only two men from the cruiser left on their feet.

The rose dawn of that next morning may have been beautiful on the Wabash. Not so for the *almirante* of the cruiser *Monacas*.

Dios! Madre miol What a shock it was, when stumbling along in the half-light, thinking of the treasury vaults of Cordova, to see the beloved cruiser swung up broadside in the mud flats. Safe—as Johnny meant her to be—but inextricably fouled up in piles, fishing boats, snarled ropes and hawsers.

The *almirante* was a corpulent, ease-loving soul, a little inclined toward apoplexy; this unfair blow nearly laid him low. Shrieks and yells tore the morning air. The frenzied scurrying of the watch on board took on the semblance of sheep escaping a wolf.

The crew of the X-35, far down-stream, sweated and tugged at a log-boom, while her radio man performed queer antics with his transmitter.

Verily, the *almirante* must have harbored in his veins the blood of the undaunted Cortez or Pizarro. The thought of his long-awaited raiding expedition fairly lifted the *Monacas* out of her labyrinth. The town folk gaped at a spectacle of crazy energy almost suspicious of Yankeeism. At five that afternoon, a reluctant fruit company's tug completed the task of swinging the Santa Blancan navy back to her original moorings.

Steam was up. The crew were at their stations. The farewell whistles blew. The population cheered until flocks of protesting parrots left the jungle.

Around the first bend of the channel surged the *Monacas*, down a quiet lane of grassy green, around the second turn and right into the middle of a myriad of logs! Small logs, huge logs. logs in jams of hundreds, and beyond them, the mischief maker, the log-boom swung loose and squarely planted across the channel.

"Praise be to the saints," gasped the *almirante*, "that we are out of sight of the townspeople!"

"Lieutenant! Let go a bow and a stern anchor. Call away the boats to clear this mess. Ah! What an indemnity that lumber company shall pay!"

The work progressed slowly. These were no experienced river-loggers. A merciful darkness obscured the rage of the crew but increased the obstacles. The *almirante* dolefully patted one of his big guns and resigned himself to waiting.

Nothing of particular note took place that night. At sea a group of absorbed submarine men were making huge hoops of stiff wire and deftly sewing together every spare piece of canvas, mattress cover and blanket that they could find.

The crew of the *Monacas* whispered together that night of a scrap of an intercepted radio message which told of Cordova hurriedly buying a new cruiser.

"This expedition," ventured a lieutenant, "seems ill fated, sir."

"Piffle!" commented the *almirante*, on reading the message. His dreams were, nevertheless, a little disturbed that night.

Early morning brought a renewed enthusiasm to the raiders. Her path cleared once more, the *Monacas* steamed triumphantly to sea and turned her savage beak toward Cordova. Her commander twisted his mustachios as he thought of the futile treaty-makers and of that Yankee admiral. In two, three days he would have demolished the Cordovan forts. He rubbed his hands as he thought of the coming presidential elections. A glorious chance! He even smiled benignantly, that afternoon, upon his communication officer as that unfortunate handed him a message.

From U. S. S. *Tuscarora* to U. S. S. *Jefferson* (intercepted; in international code). Have received authoritative news of purchase by Cordova of large, four-funneled cruiser, fifteen thousand tons, armored, six eight-inch guns. Proceed to Santa Blanca attempt to avert expected hostilities.

The *almirante's* neck-hair distinctly rose. Four funnels! Speed! Fifteen thousand tons! Armor! He glanced at his own puny five-inch guns and swallowed thickly. He mustn't let this unnerve him. Members of the crew had stopped work to watch.

He turned fiercely to his wireless expert:

"Dog! Why do you receive nothing but

lies with your flapdoodle contraption? Take this thing away and forget it. Can that weak bunch of cutthroats in Cordova afford to buy a vessel that would bankrupt our own noble country? Pooh, sir, *pooh!*"

The *Monacas* plowed on while her crew muttered and the officers looked grave. The *almirante* paced his quarterdeck proudly, but a phrase stuck in his head—

"Avert expected hostilities."

Woof!

Off ahead of the *Monacas*, some twenty miles, a tall young skipper in ragged dungarees brushed an impatient hand through his yellow mop and stared dubiously at his squatty little chief. The latter stared back sadly.

"Jenks, it looks bad for the Cordovan forts. It sure does. Here we are half-way to Cordova, that *Monacas* overhauling us at a knot an hour, and all our tricks worked out."

Jenks wagged his head. They thought, screwing their eyebrows into knots, while the X-35 methodically threw ten-foot waves over her shoulder at them.

A head appeared at the foot of the conning tower, and the radio man's desolate wail reported:

"Cap'n! Here's a code message relayed from Panama that says there won't be no treaty for at least three days!"

The gloom on the bridge took firmer hold. The young skipper's shoulders drooped and his jaw tightened whitely. Jenks descended to the hot, oily control-room and visited frightfulness upon the compartment cleaners. Forward, a group of desperate looking enginemen huddle between the swinging, clanging bunk-frames and abandoned their brief off-watch rest to curse their cranky old engines.

The succeeding twenty-four hours brought some strangely mixed emotions to the *Monacas*. A large placard was posted, detailing the glory and honors to be forthcoming in two short days. The ship's position was plotted hourly and exhibited, as nearer and nearer she drew to the boundary. Excited men scanned the horizon, now for the Cordovan mountains, now for that vague but dreaded enemy cruiser.

Some officer suggested that the huge Cordovan defender, if it existed, might elude them and attack Santa Blanca. The *almirante* was strategist enough to stop *that* talk.

"Ha! Ha! Idiot! Would she leave her

own coast to ruin, while attacking ours? Don't be alarmed, young man! We're nearly there, and you don't hear of any treaty being signed, do you?"

This was all very good, according to several, but didn't their illustrious leader admit the existence of the cruiser? Perhaps the Cordovans were refusing the treaty because of their new naval power. Nice cheery thought!



THEN came, about noon, a bomb-shell. A message, obviously from the dreaded cruiser herself, to a Cordovan fort, announcing her intention of finding the *Monacas*.

A close shave to a mutiny! The crew must finally be called aft and harangued. All of the self-nominated president's eloquence was brought to bear, preceded and followed by patriotic speeches from other officers. The *almirante's* final plea was for watchful advance.

"Men," he roared, "if there is a cruiser, the *Monacas* should see her first, on account of her size. But by all the saints, this whole affair is a hoax! There can't be such a vessel!"

The Santa Blancans went on, but it is worthy of note that her navigator examined the chart studiously for good places to beach the blazing wreck in his mind's eye. The number of voluntary look-outs was extraordinary.

Fifteen miles farther to the westward the submarine struggled desperately to hold her few miles' lead, burying for minutes together the two men on her tiny bridge with the seas she could not breast.

The *Monacas* was a beehive of excitement. A happy thought from her ward-room brought two hogsheads of rum to be broached for all hands on the quarterdeck. There were mingled cheers and yells of defiance when a press news dispatch disclosed a tie-up among the treaty-makers in Washington.

An impressive ceremony was made of the passing of the boundary of their foe. Where was the beggarly enemy?

The islands marking the mouth of the largest Cordovan seaport were already bumps on the horizon. The *almirante* was at tea when a wailing yell brought him to his feet. A rush to the deck above, a wild look around. Ah-h! Full in the scarlet ball of the setting sun stood four funnels, black and monstrous, marking the dreaded

enemy hull down over the horizon. Smoke belched from every funnel.

The *Monacas* halted. A frightful silence fell on her crew, a period of dull, stunned staring. The sun set, the swift tropic twilight came and faded. Still the *Monacas* lay and rolled, while straining eyes saw the rising funnels fade in the darkness.

Then all gasped. They were discovered! A short spatter of flame, followed quickly by five others, burst from the vicinity of those four stacks. Too dark to mark the fall of shot but they could imagine all too well those eight-inch slugs of destruction splashing about them.

The shouts of the officers, almost drowned by excited bugles, sent the crew to battle stations. The *almirante* became a demon of energy.

"Douse every light on the ship! Quick! We shall try to disappear or catch her unawares and ram her!"

Extra boilers were lighted off, powder and shell hoists creaked while the disillusioned, desperate crew closed up around the guns. The *Monacas* turned like a wraith, black as the pit with her lights out, and stole to seaward on a slanting course.

The enemy's fire slackened with the darkness. A stiff northwest wind had mustered a huge pile of ragged clouds to favor the Santa Blancans.

The *almirante* cursed his rashness while outlining with the navigator a mad plan for a forlorn-hope attack. The enemy could not be out-distanced, nor out-fought, but——

"We must get on her unengaged side," he said grimly, "and use our heavy ram! If those clouds will only spread!"

The ship swept on, throbbing under the labor of her engines, the rising wind making a shrieking banshee of every tight piece of rigging. The huddled crew glowered at the occasional gun flashes which seemed to burst at random from the Cordovan.

The tense hours wore on. The *Monacas* passed far astern of the enemy who seemed to be steaming parallel to the coast, her guns now silent. Another three miles to seaward and the *Monacas* turned in pursuit. She must be brought abreast the enemy and a surprise blow struck before the faintest suspicion of dawn could betray them.

Hourly reliefs poured coal into the yawning furnaces, coffee and food were passed among the men. Two officers crouched in a wing of the bridge and stared till their

eyes ached for the occasional smudge in the darkness which betrayed the foe.

Three o'clock had just struck when the *almirante* finally jerked to the watch officer:

"Have the gun's crews stand by! We are ahead now, and we shall turn to ram in five minutes!"

At that very instant a perfect inferno of flashing roars burst from the enemy's side! A gun flared every second while the exposed Santa Blancans ducked imaginary shells. A concerted groan burst from the crew. The frenzied men awaited no orders but opened wild, scattered return fire, aimed pointblank and sprinkled with curses. A yell arose, aft, followed closely by another from the bow:

"Torpedo! Torpedo!"

They all watched those streaking white bands of phosphorescence in fascinated horror: saw one pass astern, a clean miss by two hundred yards, the other miss the bow by inches.

That was the end. The *almirante* sagged against the rail.

"Get her away," he gasped to the navigator. The *Monacas* frankly turned tail and flew for home.

 THE American destroyer *Jefferson* coming up to the scene at dawn, barely glimpsed the Santa Blancan as a speck on the horizon, while, wallowing on the late battlefield, lay the strangest creature ever spirited out of the Arabian Nights, still firing an occasional shot after her vanquished opponent.

The *Jefferson* ranged alongside, the admiral from Panama and a gray-bearded statesman leaning over the side in pop-eyed wonder.

A grimy, battered submarine with four large, black tubes, erected by guy wires,

towering over her bridge: with a haggard bunch of cutthroats clinging soaking wet to her blistered rapid fire gun, and "X-35" showing between dirt and smoke smudges on her side. A ragged, jaunty figure on the bridge saluted the astounded treaty-bringers politely.

The admiral recognized him, finally.

"Wha-what the — does this mean, sir!"

The admiral never used nor needed a megaphone, but he stuttered in his amazement. "Put those stinkin' fires out and come aboard here and explain yourself!"

The "stinkin' fires" were smoking paint pots judiciously placed so that their smoke went up the four canvas tubes.

A boat once more brought Johnny Saunders to the *Jefferson*. He ran the gantlet of the open-mouthed crew and entered the cabin. The crew held its breath to hear the explosion. None came. Three distinguished gentlemen listened to the young man's hurried recital for a solid half-hour.

"And you can see, sir," concluded Johnny, "there was nothin' to it. As I say, we just sent a lot of radios tellin' about this new cruiser we'd thought up; rigged up those four smoke-stacks, took all the shells and made blank cartridges out of 'em, fired two dummy torpedoes and the bird went home!"

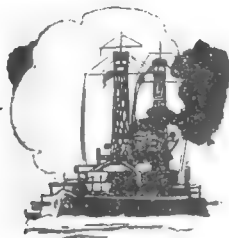
He paused uncertainly and twisted his battered cap.

The admiral rose impressively and put his hand on Johnny's shoulder.

"Boy," he said, "you're a sailorman!"

He cleared his throat and turned to his two companions who were examining a radio copy of the newest Washington treaty.

"Allow me, gentlemen. A typical example of our young officers. That's why I sent him down here."





The Captive

AN INCIDENT IN THE AFFAIRS OF MOHAMED ALI by George E. Holt

Author of "The Adventure of the Third Scribe," "The Adventure of the Captain of the Guards," etc.

NOW it came about that Mohamed Ali, upon reaching his village among the foot-hills at the Atlas, after his journey to El Arache to accomplish the release of his Third Scribe from the clutches of the *basha* and the grim walls of the Sultan's House, met with news which caused him both surprize and chagrin.

The mission to El Arache had been successful. Mamun, the Third Scribe, had been saved from the public beating and the death which the *basha* had promised should follow it as punishment for the rescue of his sister Azalaya and other little matters between them; the *basha* himself had been made to taste of the whip, though but lightly, and had been removed from a troubled world by the swift knife of vengeance in the hand of the daughter of Sid El-Halk. All of which had been highly satisfactory to Mohamed Ali and his men, who, now that the Third Scribe was free and with them, knew that their leader was about to make an effort to regain the power of which his enemies had deprived him. Mohamed Ali himself had been watching events with a critical eye—and believed that the time was nearly come when, by a bold move, he might get back what he had lost. Then had come the need to rescue the Third Scribe, and no sooner had this been done than he was met with the news of yet another demand upon his attention.

This news was borne by a cousin of the outlaw, twice removed, who lived an idle life in a little village near Tangier and who occasionally served his famous relative by bringing him information or gossip from that Mother of Talk. Mustapha he was called, a name commonplace enough and therefore well suited to its bearer, a youth of no especial merits or demerits, either physical, mental, or moral. Colorless, unassertive, blasé—and therefore adapted to hearing and seeing much and to saying and doing little.

"It is true, Mohamed Ali," he said, lazily, when he had been invited to a seat upon the cushions beside his kinsman, "that the business which brought me here was of no great importance—merely the report that the son of Sidi Guebbas, the Vizier of War, is to become *basha* of Tangier. But I was weary of the city and was glad even of that excuse to come for a while into the hills. However, when I arrived here, only a few hours ago, I learned that unknowingly I had news of some value, I think."

"And that?" asked Mohamed Ali, as the youth paused to light a French cigaret, the vile fumes of which caused the outlaw's nose to twitch.

"That?" it was *not* you who yesterday seized and carried off the person of Heinrich Lehner, the newly arrived clerk of the German Consulate, as he was riding among the hills. Or at least they tell me here that it was not you."

"*Allah kerim!*" cried Mohamed Ali, oblivious now to the stench of the cigaret. "Assuredly I did not carry him off. What chatter of fools is this?"

"Not the chatter of fools, esteemed cousin," corrected Mustapha, shaking his head and inspecting the burning end of his cigaret. "Herr Lehner *was* seized and carried off."

"But, name of Allah! Does that signify that I purloined him?" There was indignation in his tone.

"You—hm!— You have some little reputation along this line, you will recall," observed Mustapha, smiling faintly, but avoiding the eye of Mohamed Ali.

"*Y'Allah!* Perhaps I have. Also have you some little reputation for smoking vile cigarets—still I presume that you are not the only one who does so."

"I prefer the English brands," retorted Mustapha, his smile broadening. "But—unfortunately, I was quite short of funds. Now, when I leave here I hope to be able to buy the better sort, so that I shall not be further criticized."

Mohamed Ali restrained a grin, but he said nothing.

"Besides," continued Mustapha, getting back to the affair of the German, "it is said in Tangier that it *was* you."

"But it was *not!*" reiterated Mohamed Ali, loudly.

Mustapha shook his head slowly, as one unconvinced—and in his eyes was a little gleam which might have been amusement: as a baby he had bounced upon Mohamed Ali's knees and he was fully aware how far he could go with his kinsman.

"Not only is it said, also it is believed," he offered.

"Hmph! By the wise owls of the streets and market-places; those who see a flea and immediately shout, 'Behold, a camel!' After which all the world sees a camel."

"Not so, cousin. By the foreign officials, including those of the German Embassy. By our own officials, also. Even by the *Naiib*." He referred to the Sultan's representative in Tangier. "The affair is not public property—as yet. But few know of it."

"Now, by the name of the Prophet—" began Mohamed Ali, but the bearer of news interrupted him.

"And with excellent reason. A letter signed with your signature—I saw it myself!—was sent to the German Consulate,

demanding ransom for the clerk and threatening his death if the ransom be not promptly paid."

Mohamed Ali rose hastily from the cushions and for a space stood gazing down, with wrinkled forehead and fierce, puzzled eyes, at his cousin. Then his lips began to move, and he spoke earnestly for a while, although his speech was marked neither by delicacy nor great coherency. Mustapha listened unmoved until Mohamed Ali ceased. Then he observed smiling brightly upward:

"An education is a fine thing! I think I shall have to attend the *madrasah*. Assuredly I could not have expressed my opinions so well. However—I knew it was not you—because the signature on the letter was a forgery. Wherefore—I judged that the matter would interest you. The German *bashador* prefers to look upon the matter as a practical joke; the French *bashador* prepares to make the most of it——"

"Interest me!" shouted the outlaw. "Interest me! Am I to be made the scapegoat for every rascal in Morocco? Am I to be charged with every—*Allah kerim!* Interest me!"

"I thought also," went on Mustapha dispassionately, "that the matter appeared as though it might have a motive which concerned you: Although of course—I know nothing of——"

Mohamed Ali's face reddened still further with repressed emotion.

"No; assuredly not!" His voice was heavy with scorn. "One person forges another's name to such a document merely as an act of friendship! Especially where the matter concerns the German Government. Hmph! Stay you here with that camel-hair you smoke. I go outside where the air is cleaner."

He left the cottage and shuffled off toward an olive-grove, a favorite spot for meditation. Mustapha lighted [another cigaret, grinned cheerfully, rose and at the doorway raised his voice in address to his relative's broad back:

"*Ohe!* Mohamed Ali. There is one other thing, a matter which I forgot."

Mohamed Ali swung about and paused, waiting.

"There was one in Tangier," said Mustapha, "who did *not* believe that you were concerned in the matter—Hadj Ahmed, of the slipper shop on the *Siageen*. That he told me. And also he told me—or

suggested, rather—that if I should see Mohamed Ali, it might be well for me to whisper to him a certain name.”

The youth paused to inhale deeply of his tobacco smoke and to expel it slowly.

“Whisper it, then! Whisper it, for the love of Allah!” growled Mohamed Ali.

Mustapha shot the cigaret from his fingers.

“El Zinab!” he shouted, so loudly that a dog in the village barked in reply.

And with a laugh at the startled face of his relative, he shuffled off toward the village in search of a pretty maid he knew was there.

Mohamed Ali let him go, and shortly resumed his way toward the olive-grove. But now he had a possible key to the situation. He had turned but twice in the grove before he stopped abruptly and nodded his head several times, as one suddenly convinced of the truth of a matter.

“Hmph! *Allah kerim!* ‘Now we have plainly declared our signs unto those who will consider,’ ” he quoted from The Book. And again: “‘We fear lest some adversity befall us, but it is easy for Allah to give victory.’ El Zinab! Hmph! He has not the head to conceive, nor the stomach to carry out, this thing alone— Nor would he, alone, dare to use my name in so careless a manner. *La! La!* There is a power behind him. Assuredly—assuredly. He is as those who gain courage from strong liquor. Nor is this thing for his direct personal gain—he is a tool only. And as all things are now political, therefore he is the tool of politics. But he is not in favor with the Sultan nor with any of our own people. Wherefore the power behind him assuredly must be either England — which I do not believe — Germany — which seems unreasonable — or France—which—which— Hmph! It fits the plans of France as my slipper fits my foot!

“No doubt the Paris newspapers of today point out that Morocco grows more and more unsafe for the European—that Mohamed Ali is the source of much evil—that he is only one of many—that safety may be expected only when the country becomes a French Protectorate. Hmph! But—perhaps Germany has arranged this thing—in order to strengthen her own hand, by demands upon the Sultan, while the German clerk is safe and sound—and probably intoxicated—in some café in Berlin! We are children at intrigue, we Moors! France or Germany, assuredly.”

A grin swept his face.

“This affair will be an alibi for the El Arache business,” he reflected. “Or—the El Arache business will be an alibi for this! A number of people will be puzzled, I think— However—such use of our name and reputation is not good: we must consider what may be done about it.”

For awhile he walked, absorbed in thought. Then he chuckled—and Mohamed Ali’s chuckles usually meant trouble for some one.

“Allah!” he exclaimed. “Is it not written in some philosophy, that the best thing with which to confound liars is the truth?”

With which he returned to his house and summoned to him his *khalifa*—a man who bore upon his right cheek a crescent-shaped white scar.

“You remember him who is called El Zinab?” he asked, after he had told the tale to the *khalifa*.

“Assuredly, Mohamed Ali,” replied Sid Aidomar. “He it is who was concerned with that plot against the English *bashador* some years ago. And also was he punished upon one occasion for securing a sum of money by use of the name of some *basha* or other—I have forgotten whom. I do not think, however, that *he* is clever with the pen; but I have been told that he took in marriage a cousin of Si Dowhdi, who, as all know, is clever in that; so clever that the French Legation found it necessary to dispense with his services as scribe. Wherefore—white feathers do not fall from black crows. But I believed El Zinab to be in Algeria still, whither he went after the English affair. However—those who go far away for a good cause are apt to return for an evil one.”

“Hadj Ahmed, the seller of slippers, is very wise—and is our friend,” observed Mohamed Ali. “He would send by Mustapha no message in which there were not truth. Therefore unquestionably El Zinab has returned—although this may be known to but few. And—yes, I remember now: Si Dowhdi *was* once in the employ of the French Legation! Hmph! Good! That is important. And El Zinab—”

“The trick is one which has every appearance of coming from his bag,” offered the *khalifa*. “And of course he is only the manikin; stronger men than he planned the act and pull the cords which make him move.”

“Without doubt,” assented Mohamed Ali hastily. “Wherefore—”

And he proceeded to speak of the matter of ways and means. As a result of which the next few days saw various things taking place which were quite unexpected by any one save Mohamed Ali and certain of his friends.

 SI DOWHDI, squatting upon the floor of a little native coffee-house near Tangier, was peacefully sipping a glass of black coffee. It was the supper hour and he was almost alone, those who, an hour before, thronged the café, having drifted away by ones and twos and threes to seek the *kesk'soo* prepared by their various Fatimahs. Now entered the coffee-house a man, wrapped in a coarse brown *djellaba*, who for an hour had sat in an inconspicuous corner of the wall outside, the *koob* of his *djellaba* drawn down over his face. Passers-by judged that he slept, but in this they were wrong: His eyes watched from beneath the lowered *koob*, and when Si Dowhdi was left alone, save for a stolid-faced camel-driver, he rose, entered the room, and, calling for coffee, sat down, cross-legged, so close to Si Dowhdi that that expert with the pen scowled in annoyance and shifted himself a bit.

A fat host waddled up with a glass of steaming coffee, collected with an ingratiating smile and an expression of thanks, the copper coin which the newcomer dropped into his somewhat dirty hands, and waddled back to his kitchen. The camel-driver having emptied his glass, stretched himself out on the floor and pulled his cloak over his face, with the evident design of going to sleep.

A low voice reached the ear of Si Dowhdi.

"Most absolute quiet, Si Dowhdi," it seemed to say.

The pen expert started and turned his face slowly toward the man who sat beside him.

"There are ten shots in this—but one is enough," the gentle voice continued.

Si Dowhdi, with widening eyes, saw that his companion held in his lap, almost covered by the loose sleeve of his *djellaba*, a vicious-looking automatic pistol. Slowly he raised his eyes from the weapon to the face of the man who held it. And as he did so, that man lifted his *koob* a little way so that his features were unobscured.

"Sid Aidomar!" whispered Dowhdi. "Name of Allah!" and panic swept into his eyes.

"Most absolute quiet," repeated the other. "Is the coffee paid for?"

Si Dowhdi nodded abruptly. He was thinking of more important things.

"In that case," said the *khalifa*, "we will rise, and go forth where we may talk. You will precede me. Do not forget—this."

His eyes pointed out the covered pistol.

With a shrug of his shoulders Si Dowhdi rose and the *khalifa* followed. Outside the coffee-house was darkness, and here the *khalifa* placed one hand upon the arm of Si Dowhdi. The other hand, Si Dowhdi knew, carried death.

They came to the crumbling ruins of an ancient saint's tomb, phosphorescent through the shadows of the giant cactus and spear-like aloe which guarded it.

"Where, Si Dowhdi, is El Zinab?" The voice of the *khalifa* was gentle.

"Allah knows," replied Si Dowhdi steadily, although his heart jumped.

"True, He knows," agreed the *khalifa*. "Is it your desire, then, that I send you as my messenger to inquire of Him?"

The voice was still gentle—too gentle—but the nose of the pistol nuzzled Si Dowhdi's ribs.

"Why should I know of El Zinab?" queried Si Dowhdi. "But take away that gun."

"The servant is apt to know what his master is about," replied the *khalifa*. "However—ah! You would!"

His captive swung swiftly and struck the gun from his hand; but like the tiger which had put the scar upon his cheek, the *khalifa* sprang upon him and bore him down, his strong hands upon Dowhdi's neck. Then he whistled, shrilly, and a shadow ran from behind the saint's tomb.

"A rope, Hassan," ordered the *khalifa*.

Hassan tore the turban from his head and quickly bound Si Dowhdi's hands.

"Now bring horses," commanded the *khalifa*, and the shadow of Hassan disappeared in the darkness.

"Where," demanded the *khalifa*, his hand upon the windpipe of the penman, "is El Zinab?"

And he tightened his grip a little.

No answer came.

"Where—is—El—Zinab?" he spaced his words largely, and at each word his fingers tightened on Si Dowhdi's throat. With the last word a gurgle sounded and he loosened his grip.

"He—went—to—Es—Salah," Si Dowhdi surrendered.

The *khalifa* rose as Hassan came out of the shadows with horses.

"Tie him on one saddle," he ordered.

"Where do you take me?" asked Dowhdi, harshly, for his throat pained him.

"To a place where you will be an esteemed guest," the *khalifa* replied. "So long as you obey orders," he added dryly. And after a moment: "I am sure, also, that you will obey orders, inasmuch as they will come from Mohamed Ali."

"Mohamed Ali," cried Si Dowhdi. "Aweely! Aweely! What does he desire of me?"

"That," made answer the *khalifa*, "is something which for the present will serve to sharpen your wits upon. Now let us ride."



THEY rode swiftly and in silence, save for the thud of their horses' hoofs. After a while they turned into the hills, and for an hour threaded their way through rocky defiles and along cañon edges. Then, topping a rise, they swung down into a little village where a few lights twinkled yellow and a hoarse dog barked warning.

Rubbing the blood back into his numbed hands, Si Dowhdi was led into a small cottage, where a big, brown, whiskered man sat upon cushions. Si Dowhdi made low obeisance; he knew Mohamed Ali when he saw him. But there was no pleasure for him in the meeting.

Nor did he find any great amount of enjoyment in the commands which Mohamed Ali issued to him—after a discussion in which the outlaw asked questions and the expert with the pen answered them. Nevertheless, he obeyed the commands as one obeys who knows that disobedience means quick death—wherefore the next day's sunset saw him, together with three of Mohamed Ali's sturdy, armed hill-men, bringing their sweating horses to a halt in the little village of Es-Salah. Si Dowhdi, without dismounting, sent a villager to summon him whom he sought.

El Zinab came hurriedly. He was a sleek, fat man having the pasty-white complexion of those who avoid the air and sunshine, and his pale eyes were furtive under low-hanging lids.

"The *bashador* of the French desires me to bring the German to him at once," Si Dowhdi informed him.

"But—but—this was not the plan," objected El Zinab. "I was to keep him here until——"

"The plan has been changed. Does a *bashador* need to explain matters to all the world? Here is the order—if you can read."

"I can read," retorted El Zinab. "Also, I know the signature of the French *bashador*."

"That is well," replied Si Dowhdi promptly. "I—hm!—was afraid you might not."

The faintest of smiles swept his face.

El Zinab unfolded the document.

"This is not the paper of the French Legation," he observed.

"Naturally not," retorted Si Dowhdi. "Documents are sometimes lost—and at other times are forcibly taken from their bearers. I do not imagine that His Excellency would care to have this matter known to—well, to the German foreign office, for example."

"Allah, no! That is why I am surprized. If the German is to be taken to the French Legation——"

"He is not to be taken to the Legation," Si Dowhdi interrupted. "But to a place which the *bashador* has prepared. I do not know what it signifies—nor am I fool enough to be concerned beyond the carrying out of my orders. Those who seek too much knowledge frequently find themselves suddenly dead. I wish to live."

"And I, also," agreed El Zinab. "Hm! Assuredly this is the *bashador's* signature—but wait."

He fished into his *shakarah* and produced another folded paper. Opening it, he placed it near the first.

"Yes—they are the same, identically. An order is an order. Wherefore, do you write upon this a receipt for the person of the German and I will deliver him to you."

"A receipt! Was I ordered to give a receipt for him?"

"It is so ordered here," replied El Zinab, offering the document to Si Dowhdi. That person read his own handiwork with serious face.

"So it is," he agreed. "Of course, I had not read the order before. I shall sign, therefore. No need to send for pen and ink—I have them here, in this invention of the *Nasrini*."

He brought forth a fountain pen and wrote.

"Now the German," he said, returning the order to El Zinab, who strode off.

"But stay," Si Dowhdi halted him. "Perhaps you would like to ride with us—and see the *bashador* for yourself."

"*Allah kerim!* No!" El Zinab was emphatic. "It was not so ordered—and all is paid for. I do not travel for pleasure, in *this* part of the country, after such work as this."

"But—it is known that the abductor of the German was Mohamed Ali," Si Dowhdi informed him.

"Mohamed— What! How is the name of Mohamed Ali connected with this?"

Fear now wrote upon his face with cold fingers.

"Then you did not know that a letter was sent to the German Legation bearing his name—demanding ransom and assuming the responsibility?"

"*Allah! No!* Mohamed Ali! I—I would not have done this thing—Mohamed Ali! But—are you certain of this?"

"As certain as one can be," Si Dowhdi assured him, solemnly enough, though he was laughing inside.

"In that case—I have a house in Algeria——"

El Zinab was talking to himself.

"If I were you, I should occupy it—quickly," offered Si Dowhdi. "And—perhaps I will seek one there myself. Mohamed Ali's name is not to be trifled with."

"A thing which Allah knows is a true one," agreed El Zinab heartily. "I will bring the German."

Si Dowhdi grinned broadly at the receding back of El Zinab.

Very shortly Herr Lehner, wrapped in a white sulham, and properly bound and gagged beneath the garment, was brought forth and placed upon a horse. Si Dowhdi gathered up his own bridle reins.

"One further thing," he said, to El Zinab. "I should send a messenger at once, if I were you, to the French *bashador*, advising him that you have placed this man in my hands—in accordance with his orders. This he asked me to tell you—for reasons I am unacquainted with. We, of course, do not go to Tangier. *Selaama*, cousin."

Giving El Zinab no chance to argue, nor to question, he rode away, followed by his party.

"*Y'Allah!*" growled El Zinab to the darkness. "And at the same time I shall be riding eastward—toward Algeria. Mohamed Ali! *Y'Allah!*"



NOW, upon the following day—when, as was written in the Book of Fate, El Zinab rode steadily eastward, and Si Dowhdi prayed fervently to his gods that El Zinab was deserting the country, and the *khalifa* and a number of others chortled with glee—a serious and gloomy conference was being held in a serious and gloomy room in Tangier by three serious and gloomy gentlemen.

The room was the almost windowless reception hall in the official residence of the *Naib*, or Sultan's representative. The three serious and gloomy men were the *Naib* himself, an ancient, white-bearded Moor, delicately fashioned and fragile as a Dresden china manikin, wrapped in the dignity of a gossamer-like white *k'sa*; the pompous, fat, red-faced, perspiring German *Chargé d'Affaires*; and the suave, dark head of the French Diplomatic Mission to Morocco. The subject which was being discussed was serious and gloomy also—especially as presented by the French diplomat—who had done most of the presenting—to the *Naib*, who sought vainly in his thoughts for "the hidden thing" of all incidents, and to the German *Chargé*—who could not fail to see that his nation had lost not only a clerk, but a trick in the game it was playing against France for control of Morocco.

The lost clerk worried him little—the *Vaterland* was full of clerks—but the lost trick did.

"And so you perceive," the Frenchman said, slowly, firmly, "that the matter is of vital importance. The maintenance of order in Morocco falls, under the terms of the Algeciras convention, upon France. If your Government, *Monsieur le Naib*, can not guarantee the safety of foreigners, even of the officials of foreign Governments—" he spread his hands and shrugged his shoulders delicately in inquiry—"what remains, then—except that France should take the matter in hand?"

"And send military?" questioned the *Naib* gently.

The desires of France were as an open book to his wise old eyes.

"Unnecessary! Unnecessary!" The face of the German *Chargé* grew crimson. "This is not serious. I think it is just a joke, only. We—we can protect our own."

"Ah, without doubt, *Monsieur le Chargé*," agreed the French Minister sweetly. "But there are not only your own to be considered.

There are many, many hundreds of others—of English—of my own nationals, of——”

“Why not pay Mohamed Ali what he asks? That we are willing to do,” interrupted the German *Chargé* undiplomatically. “If this is not a joke,” he added hurriedly.

“And have the same thing occur again—in a month or two? That is only encouragement of anarchy. No! This country must be policed. Mohamed Ali——”

The door opened and one of the *Naib*’s native secretaries entered, followed by—Herr Lehner.

The faces of the three diplomats formed a study in human emotions. The mouth of the French *bashador* hung open, his eyelids stretched apart and his brows furrowed. The cheeks of the German *Chargé* crimsoned and his eyes half-closed to conceal the relief within them. And upon the face of the venerable *Naib* settled a smile, which was almost a grin: he had seen many a strange thing in his long years of service.

“And,” asked the German *Chargé* of the abashed Lehner, “where have you been?”

“I do not know, sir,” replied the clerk.

“Only that it was among the hills.”

“Were you taken captive—and by whom?”

“I was taken captive—but I do not know by whom. You know, sir, that I know nothing of the language, as yet, nor do I know the natives.”

The German *Chargé* shrugged his shoulders, French-wise.

“Was it Mohamed Ali?” he asked.

“I do not know Mohamed Ali, sir. I was seized by men whom I did not know, taken blindfold into the hills, kept a while at one village, then taken to another, and today brought to the edge of town and released. All by strangers who talked not at all.”

The French Minister was again about to take firm control of the situation—assuredly it would result in an increase in the number of French police!—when he observed that the native secretary who had brought in Herr Lehner had approached him and was offering a letter bearing the seal of the French Legation. Still planning his words, he broke the seal and extracted three documents. He read. And as he did so the flush of victory faded from his face, leaving it pale; his hands trembled and he swallowed.

The first document was a note from his secretary stating that the two enclosures had just been received at the Legation.

One enclosure was a message from El

Zinab, stating that, in accordance with the *bashador*’s written commands, he had released the German to Si Dowhdi.

The other was equally succinct—and as plain as the signature which ended it.

I am returning the person of the German clerk, whom I secured from El Zinab. He does not know anything. I know everything. But I shall say nothing so long as you do not do that which you intended to do. And you should not have used the name of
MOHAMED ALI.

For a space the *bashador* peered about him as through a mist. Then he gathered himself together, thrust the letters into his coat-pocket, and said:

“Your pardon, gentlemen; the letters were of personal importance. And now—as to this matter——”

“The fool knows nothing!” exclaimed the German *Chargé*, but he said it kindly. “And now I am sure it was a joke—or a mistake. If it had been Mohamed Ali—would he have released him—without securing the ransom?”

“There is the letter from Mohamed Ali,” offered the French *bashador* without emphasis.

“I think I shall study that letter more closely—perhaps,” answered the German. “The signature—hm!—signatures have been imitated.”

The French *bashador* started, almost invisibly, but the eyes of the German *Chargé*, who was watching him, narrowed slightly. An impression swept through him—an impression, the truth of which he was never able to verify, which caused him to proceed boldly.

“Yes,” he said, “who knows? As for us, we—Germany—do not desire to make trouble for our friend, Morocco.” He spoke now to the *Naib*. “I suggest we call the matter a closed incident—and let those who know of it believe it was only—a joke.”

His blue eyes sought the face of the French *bashador*, pointedly, steadily.

The *bashador* shrugged his excellently tailored shoulders, breathed deeply once, and smiled at the eyes of the German *Chargé*.

“It would seem that we lack proper evidence upon which to proceed,” he said. “Therefore let us call the incident closed, as you suggest.”

“That,” agreed the venerable *Naib*, his face serious, but his eyes holding a little glow of patriarchal amusement, “is quite satisfactory to the Moroccan Government.”

And he bade them stately *au revoir*.

A Rimrock Judas

by
Alex. McLaren



A WESTERN mining camp without at least one lost mine somewhere in its history is an uninteresting blot on the map, and the lost "Mother Lode" of the Crater Creek placers was all that saved Rimrock from historical ignominy.

In pioneer days great fortunes had been won from the gravel diggings and dissipated in running tunnels and sinking shafts looking for the Mother Lode; the source of the rich gold-bearing quartz that had been so plentiful in the placer. Years of fruitless search had made the mountain side at Old Camp—ten miles up creek from Rimrock—look like an exaggerated prairie-dog town with its cuts, dumps and mounds. Yet with all that the lost Mother Lode still remained the one alluring mystery of the district; one the calloused chair-lizards of Rimrock never tired of discussing again and again.

"Shorty" Dobbins arrived in Rimrock some time between two suns. "Scotty" Fraser, merchant-prince and local tightwad, found him asleep on the store porch in early morning.

"Where ye frae?" queried the austere Scotty.

The little man with short bowed legs, massive shoulders, muscle-knotted arms, and a face expressing simplicity in the extreme, blinked in the morning sun.

"From every place but here, and if I don't get a job *pronto*—I'll be from here immediately if not sooner."

Scotty gave him chores to do and Shorty became an atom in the soporific aggregation of Rimrock. His iron-clad reticence as to antecedents won for him the name of "nut," and his refusal to fight upon several occasions, the name of "coward."

He slaved and saved and became fired with stories of the fabulous wealth of the lost Mother Lode. A hunch came to him, and he kept the particulars to himself, bought a decrepit burro, loaded her with grub and left town, while the slings and arrows of ridicule were directed at him from all sides.

His first stop was at Old Camp where he drove a long tunnel in hard granite and all he found was a vein of barren glassy quartz. But that failure didn't dampen his hunch one iota; it merely aimed his search in another direction. There are some things you can't kill, and indomitable faith in a hunch is one of them.

Up the creek, far above where the rich quartz had ever been found before, he unearthed several pieces with thin slivers of porphyry adhering to one side and slate to the other. Now he knew that, when found, the Mother Lode would be between those two formations, and his hunch grew accordingly. But a hunch not played is a mind-preying liability.

He was out of everything—grub and mining supplies, but backed by the courage of his hunch he went to town and did what no other prospector had ever done before: He got a bill of goods from old Scotty on credit.

"Now mind ye," Scotty said, "I'm no grub stakin' ye—I wouldna' enter a mining deal wi' my ain brother; I'd get stung if I did. I'm sellin' ye on credit, and if yer hunch doesna' pan out ye'll be expected to work the bill out. Ye'll do me a favor by not saying anything of this—I'd be laughing stock of the camp."

Back at camp he fought shy of misgivings and played a more optimistic hand than ever. The country above was covered with a layer of hard black basalt, hundreds of feet thick in places. A formation, so he had heard local experts say, that never had been known as mineral-bearing. His hunch told him that somewhere beneath that adamant blanket lay the Mother Lode, but to be caught driving a tunnel in that hitherto unproductive formation would be to call down ridicule. He didn't mind the ridicule, but it would eventually come to Scotty's ears; there the shoe pinched, for he knew Scotty would shut off all credit. He shuddered at the very thought.

His next move was to pitch camp several miles above, in a meadow right beneath the frowning black Crater Peak. It was much nearer the new tunnel he was running in the basalt. From there he made regular trips down to his former camp to keep it in such shape as would give passers-by the impression that he was still in the neighborhood. He maintained two camps, as it were.

 HE SAT on the dump waiting for the smoke from his last round of shots to clear away. A light breeze, tempered with the chill of coming Winter and singing a late Fall tune, whimpered through the trees. Shorty shivered as he pulled a frayed jumper tighter over his sweaty, muck-stained undershirt.

"Makes a fellow wonder what happened to his last Summer's wages," he mused. "Grub and powder's about gone, about all that's left of my duds is the buttonholes, and it won't be long now till the snow'll be so deep in here the tree tops'll look like bushes."

His gaze wandered across to the everlasting snow-bank, lying beneath and in marked contrast to the jagged battle-

ments of the peak. The form of a man came into the picture, staggering along the edge of cliff above the snow. Shorty's heart fell. This, he thought, might be the beginning of the end. The man would find him and take the news to Rimrock. Then the newcomer stumbled and pitched headlong to the snow below.

Shorty watched the inert form for some time; and signs of anger gave way to those of pity and concern. His duty became plain and he fought his way through a tangled mass of manzanita and buckthorn to the man's side.

"It's 'Bum' Hennessy from Rimrock!" he exclaimed, kneeling by the unconscious man.

He must do something and do it quick for pneumonia came with a quick and deathly stride at that altitude. Taking the long, gaunt form in his arms, Shorty walked out over the snow with no more effort than if he had been carrying a child.

In the little cabin of quaking asp poles, Bum responded to hot applications and vigorous rubbing. In broken sentences he told his story.

"Got crazy on hooch—been wanderin' around—don't know how long—I'll recommend snow-banks for their soberin' qualities."

That night in the narrow bunk, Bum slept and snored while Shorty tossed about in torment. He could only visualize the worst and made up his mind to take Bum to town under cover of darkness and thereby minimize the chance of him recognizing the locality.

In the morning before Shorty realized it, Bum was out of bed and gazing through the open door. He devoted a sickly smile to his host.

"What the — you doin' way up here? You're s'posed to be running tunnel down near Old Camp."

Shorty's face fell and with it his spirits.

"I am running a tunnel—below here. Moved up here so's old Maggie could get better feed in this meadow," he lied clumsily.

Bum's weakened condition kept him in the cabin for several days, and Shorty worked in his tunnel with redoubled efforts. On the fourth day the little man came in from work at noon. Bum was smiling and dinner smoking on the table. The guest had been busy in more ways than one. He pointed to an old rifle and pistol hanging on the wall.

"Cleaned 'em up," he said. "Sure is careless to let shootin' irons get gummed-up the way them was. Can't tell in this country when you're goin' to need 'em *pronto*."

A cursory glance was all Shorty gave the guns.

"Got them with that old prospecting outfit I bought—never have needed them—never want to," he replied, slowly at first but finishing with high-pitched emphasis.

"Don't you never hanker for fresh meat? Venison or bear meat?" Bum asked wonderingly.

"No!" Shorty snapped. "I don't want to take life at all."

Bum's curiosity was aroused. He couldn't understand a man of this type.

"S'posin' some guy tried to jump your claim, or run over you? Them's killin' offenses in this neck of the woods."

"Don't—please don't talk to me about killing," Shorty pleaded. "Don't remind me," and he ran from the cabin.

In open-eyed wonder Bum stood in the doorway and watched his host sitting on a log with head buried in his hands.

"Them guys in town was right. That little — is crazier'n a bed-bug out of a job, an' he's as yellow as paint I'll bet. This ain't no place for me, I'm headin' for town *pronto*," Bum muttered.

Shorty returned before Bum had finished his dinner. He sat down but not to eat.

"I guess you think I'm queer, don't you, Bum?"

"That word might describe it," Bum answered getting up and edging closer to the old rifle.

"I killed a man once," Shorty said with choking effort. "Hit him with my fist; self-defense. The court exonerated me, but the girl didn't. That one blow cost me all I held dear in life and made a wanderer out of me. That's why I dread the word 'kill'—that's why I'm called a nut and a coward."

"Mebbe you were right at that. I take it the guy tried to take your girl. In this country that's jumpin', an' a killin' excuse no matter whether it's real estate, live stock or females."

Shorty made no answer and the two sat in silence for some time. The little man plunged into a dreaded past, and Bum tried to analyze him with a narrow mind. Shorty got up, saying he was going back to work. Half way across the meadow he

retraced his steps to the cabin and stood in the door.

"Say, Bum, did old Scotty send you out here to check up on what I was doin'?"

Bum laughed.

"What, me work for that old haggis pirate!" he exclaimed. "He wouldn't give me the sweat off his nose let alone a job."

Shorty believed him, but there was yet another matter to be settled.

"I saved your life didn't I, Bum?"

"Sure you did! If it hadn't a been for you I'd be up here in the snow now stiffer'n a fence rail. I'll get part way even with you some day for doin' it too," Bum said with unusual fervor.

"One promise is all I ask."

"All right, let's hear it."

"That you won't tell a living soul about me being away up here."

That was easy for Bum and he gave the desired promise. The request aroused his curiosity, however, and later he trailed his host to the tunnel mouth.

Bum stopped on the dump, picked up a piece of the black lava and threw it away in disgust. He looked all about and nothing but lava greeted his eye. He was more disgusted than ever as he entered the tunnel, gropingly feeling his way through the darkened passage with outstretched hands.

Shorty sat in the face, drilling a down hole. With the thud of hammer, *chug* of drill and vibrations of a whistled tune, he failed to hear Bum's entry. His first intimation was when Bum spoke—

"You got a fine dump site outside an' a nice roomy tunnel inside, but where in — is the vein?"

Shorty turned, startled for a moment.

"Haven't struck it yet, but I've a hunch I'm close to it now."

Bum scrutinized the sides, roof, and face with a knowing eye, and shook a negative head.

"Quit kiddin' yourself, Shorty. You got a swell chance of strikin' gold ore in this lava—same's I'd have hikin' on water."

Shorty went into a long detailed explanation of all the circumstances leading up to his present operations. Bum squatted on the ground puffing a cigaret and expressing commiseration. He argued with Shorty but without avail—the little man was set in his purpose.

"Oh, well, bust your — fool brains out on this hard rock if you wants to—I

should worry," Bum said disgustedly. "But don't never say you didn't have good expert advice."

With that Bum picked up one of the lighted candles and left the tunnel, saying he was going to the cabin to rest up for a trip to town that night.

Shorty knew that Bum's convictions would be those of every one else in the district and it angered him no little. He gave vent to his spleen as he rained blow after blow upon the head of the drill. Then he drove the drill through his hand and into a soft spot or cavity in the hole. It was the very first change he had encountered in over a hundred feet of tunnel. A hopeful smile marked his face. He loaded the hole with his last stick of powder, lighted the fuse and ran from the tunnel.

Before the last vibration had died down he was feeling his way back in through smoke and gas. Dropping to his knees before the pot-hole created by the shot, he disregarded the shovel and scraped back the débris with bare hands, and paid no heed to sharp, cutting quartz edges. All he knew or cared about was that he had broken through the basalt at a point where it covered the joining of porphyry and slate. There imbedded in the talc of contact lay the coveted quartz covered with yellow splotches. Gold!

He dug and pried for hours wholly unconscious of the passage of time, until he had taken out every particle possible without more blasting. He filled the hole with broken basalt and staggered from the tunnel under the weight of a sack full of ore.

On the way to the cabin he rehearsed the "I told you so" he intended springing on Bum, and a plan whereby Scotty Fraser was to become half-owner in the claim. In the cabin all was dark and Bum gone. By the dim flicker of a candle he read the short note:

Shorty:

I'm leaving for town. You don't need to make no trip on my account. Take my advice and quit that — fool hunch. Don't worry none about me telling anybody. Work old Scotty for all the grub you can, I glory in your system. Much obliged for what you done for me. *Adios.*

REGINALD FITZMAURICE HENNESSY

Shorty read and smiled—he had a smile coming. Next morning early he had Maggie saddled and headed for town with the

ore safely lashed to the saddle. In his belt he carried the old pistol that Bum had cleaned up the day before. The sudden acquisition of wealth had evidently changed his ideals that much at least. In town he put Maggie in the corral with orders that she was to get the very best the place afforded, gave his old pistol to the man for safe keeping, and walked away in the direction of Scotty's emporium weighted down with the ore.



SCOTTY FRASER was in an angry mood. A page in the open ledger was the reason. It recorded the fact that one James Dobbins was owing four hundred and odd dollars for food and mining supplies. Scotty had long prided himself on his conservative business tactics. This particular page persisted in mockingly confronting him. He slammed the book shut and tossed it into the safe.

"Every time he comes in he wheedles me out o' bill of grub. After he gets the bit o' mind I hae in store for him, he'll no do it again wi' his bloomin' hunches as he ca's them," Scotty muttered wrathfully, and emphasized it with a big bony fist on the counter.

He was so engrossed with planning what he would do that he failed to hear the subject of his ire coming through the door. A cheery voice rang out behind him:

"Hello, Scotty! Practicing sapping-up on some poor——?"

Scotty wheeled and stood glowering into the smiling face of Shorty Dobbins.

"Huh!" he grunted. "It's you, eh—what'll it be this time?"

"More grub. I got the right hunch this time, and I'll get enough supplies to do all Winter."

"Oh ye will, will ye? And ye think ye'll pay the bill this trip? Not with your — hunches but with coin of the realm, man—coin of the realm," and Scotty worked himself into a frenzy.

Shorty smiled tantalizingly.

"No, Scotty, I haven't got coin of the realm as you express it," and Shorty glanced back at the sack of ore leaning against the counter. "But I have got——"

Shorty didn't finish the sentence, but moved back out of reach of Scotty's fist. The tall, rawboned storekeeper advanced.

"Well then!" Scotty thundered, "I'll take it out of yer — lying thieving hide."

Shorty moved back until the counter behind him stopped him.

"Lying—thieving," the little man slowly repeated. "I'd rather think you were joking, Scotty. Those are hard names to swallow."

"Ye'll no hae to swallow them. I'm going to hammer them down yer lying thieving throat," shouted the now thoroughly enraged man as he made a pass at Shorty in pile-driver style.

Shorty didn't want to fight. He dodged the blow, which infuriated Scotty all the more.

"Ye're afraid to fetch; ye're a coward among yer ither accomplishments," Scotty hissed and made another drive.

Shorty ducked with cat-like agility. The blow went harmlessly past and bringing Scotty's awkward form bang against the counter. He turned on Shorty with increased rage, the latter had no other alternative other than to defend himself, and the fight was on.

Fast and furious they fought from one end of the store to the other, and Scotty began to realize that some big things came in small packages. What Shorty lacked in size he made up for in science and herculean strength. It was only the ability of the larger man to assimilate punishment that prolonged the fight. With labored breathing, and blood issuing from eyes, nose and mouth, Scotty fell to the floor and lay a broken huddled mass against the counter. Shorty bent over him.

"I'm a liar and thief, eh—a coward and won't fight?" he cried.

He grabbed the sack of ore and emptied it on the floor in front of the vanquished man.

"There you — old avaricious skinflint—that's the result of my hunch. I intended when I came in here to give you a half-interest, but now you can put down in that old book of yours that the calling of one man a liar, thief and coward has cost you a partnership in the Mother Lode of Crater Creek."

Shorty picked up several pieces from the pile, shoved them into his pockets, then kicked the balance of the pile over to Scotty.

"Take that for what I owe you; it's more than double, I know, but—I'd rather over pay than underpay."

With that Shorty walked out of the store. Just outside he met Sheriff Griggs and Tom Slade, the saloon-keeper, coming in. Both grinned at Shorty's bloody face and tattered clothes.

"Is Bum Hennessy in town?" queried Shorty.

"If he is you'll find him parked back of the stove in my saloon," answered Slade indifferently.

The two men watched Shorty as he passed up the creaky board-walk.

"Looks like he'd tangled with a cross between a cyclone an' a barbed-wire fence. Got gay with old Scotty an took to a trimmin', I guess," was Griggs comment.

Scotty presented a ludicrous sight seated upon the floor trying to examine a piece of the ore through eyes fast swelling shut.

"What the —!" exclaimed Griggs, then launched into hearty laughter. "Been scrappin' a locomotive, Scotty?"

"No, I've no been fechtin' a locomotive. Dobbins and I had a bit difference. I ca'd him a liar and a thief—I dare say I was a bit hasty."

Slade examined a piece of the ore in amazement and Griggs did likewise. Scotty rose painfully to his feet and stood looking over their shoulders.

"D'ye think it's gold?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"Sure it's gold," answered Slade. "Where'd you get it?"

"Dobbins gave it to me for what he owes. How much d'ye think's in that pile?"

Both men ignored the last question as they walked to the front door to examine the ore in better light. They remained standing there for some time carrying on a subdued conversation, broken only with sundry glances toward Scotty. When they returned Scotty was removing the grime of battle in the water-bucket. Griggs was the first to speak:

"Round here, callin' a man a liar is a heap of times just plain suicide. There's no doubt but what you feel tough over it—I would if I was your size an' a shrimp like that took me to a cleanin', but because you're a fixture, a necessity in our thrivin' community it pains me an' Slade to see a darned hobo abuse you. We got a scheme whereby you can get an interest in the claim that you're entitled to—of course, me an' Slade's got to get ours too. You'll get a third, we'll take the rest for puttin' the deal through."

"If it's jumping his claim y're thinking of I dinna think it can be done. He's surely recorded it," and Scotty shook his shaggy head. "And dinna forget he's a human

whirlwind when he starts," he added in painful recollection of recent happenings.

"I happen to know that he's recorded nothing," said Griggs firmly. "And as for his whirlwind rep—that don't scare me none. I was elected for the purpose of handlin' his kind."

It was some time ere they induced Scotty to swear to a complaint charging Shorty with attempted murder, but he finally did.

When Shorty entered Slade's place he singled Bum out of the crowd behind the stove and called him to the back room.

Bum waxed enthusiastic over the fight as Shorty told it.

"I knew that your blood'd get to percolatin' an' you'd get busy with them trip-hammers. Next you'll be cuttin' notches in your gun an' contributin' to Boot Hill."

He could hardly believe his eyes when Shorty showed him the ore.

"Don't you tell any one until I get it on record. I'm going down to the court-house right now," and Shorty turned as if to go.

Standing in the door stood the sheriff covering Shorty.

"Hands up, Dobbins!" he called. "You're darn right you're goin' down to the court-house now."

He snapped a pair of handcuffs on Shorty's wrists and ordered him ahead. Shorty was too mystified to question as Griggs pushed him through the crowd and over to jail, where he was locked in a dark, stinking cell.

Later in the day, Bum argued in vain with White, the day jailer, for permission to see the prisoner.

"Nothin' doin', Bum," White said emphatically. "He's a bad man an' orders is to let him see nobody. Now get out an' don't come botherin' me any more."

Bum wandered back to his old hang out in Slade's, and sat puzzled behind the stove. Another surprise came to him when Slade tapped his shoulder and asked him into the private office. From then on things began to dawn upon Bum.

"What's the big idea, Slade?" he asked when they were seated with a table between them.

Then, when Slade gave him a cigar—"This ain't Christmas."

"No, but it's got that day beat if you can do what we want you to do, Bum," said Slade. "We want you to show us that Shorty guy's claim."

"Huh! Thinkin' about jumpin' it, are you?"

"Whose thinking about jumping it?" Slade retorted half-angrily.

"I am, for one," returned Bum with a grin. "And bein's I'm the only man out of jail what knows where it is—looks like I got the top hand in the game."

"You don't want a mine, Bum. Show it to me and I'll pay you well in cold, hard cash."

"I might even do that, but I'll tell you, Slade, I ain't no piker; a man only gets one chance like this in a lifetime."

"I'll pay one hundred dollars."

"One hundred —!" exclaimed Bum. "Didn't I just tell you I ain't no piker?"

"Well it's that or nothing—take it or leave it."

"I'm dead sure leavin' it, believe you me. You needn't think 'cause I been on the bum round here for years you can bluff me with a no-pair hand."

Bum got up and returned to the stove, while Slade left hastily for Scotty's and a conference with his partners. That night he and Griggs rode out to try and back-track Shorty. A light snow had fallen, causing them to return to town unsuccessful.

Once more Bum was invited into the private office.

"What's your price, Bum?" asked Slade, far more solicitous than before.

"Three thousand dollars in cash an' I'll take you right to the tunnel," was Bum's prompt answer.

"It's a — hold-up, but we'll pay it."

Bum laughed.

"Sure is funny a claim-jumper kickin' about a hold-up."

That night Bum Hennessy, Sheriff Griggs and Slade were seen riding out over the Crater Creek trail.

For four long weeks Shorty languished in a darkened cell in an isolated part of the jail away from the companionship of other prisoners. He was allowed to see no one but White the day man and Timmons at night. His pleas for a lawyer were answered with mocking laughs only. He asked if Bum ever tried to see him.

"He used to come an' bother me," said White. "But since he's sold a mine an' got rich I guess he lost all interest in you."

"Bum Hennessy rich! Sold a mine!" were the thoughts that coursed through Shorty's head. Could Bum have double-crossed him after all? He didn't want to think it but

he had to think something and it was that came most readily to mind.

Then came the day when another man was shoved into his cell. It was Buck Haley and fighting had also been his downfall. He was talkative.

"Them birds, Scotty, Slade an' our honorable sheriff sure put one over on you," he said. "They got Bum to show 'em your claim an' jumped it. Now Bum's livin' in style while you're rottin' in this hooze-gow. I'd sure kill him when I got out if I was you."

Shorty saw red. His worst fears were verified. Two years of hard work was gone, confidence in fellow man was fast going, and thoughts of revenge now filled that once simple, peace-loving mind.

That night he was taken into the jail office.

"Scotty ain't goin' to prosecute so I just gotta turn you loose, Dobbins," Griggs said. "As sheriff of this county I'm givin' you two hours to leave."

Shorty buttoned his jumper and moved for the open door.

"I've got a little business to tend to," he said. "It'll take about thirty minutes—you can have the other hour and a half back—much obliged."

Outside snow covered the ground and was still falling as he made his way to the corral. The proprietor waxed angry for being aroused from a warm bed.

"Hennessy paid the bill an' took your old crowbar away three weeks ago—yes, here's your old gun, take it an' beat it. Don't come around here no more this time of night."

Shorty took the weapon, shoved it into his waistband and disappeared into the gloom of the night.



BUM had been in bed and asleep for over an hour when he was awakened by the feel of something cold against his bare neck.

"Make just one move or outcry and I'll kill you right here now," was hissed in his ear.

The inside of the room was black. He couldn't see his assailant, but there was something in the voice strangely familiar. He tried to think but a nervousness clogged memory.

"Open that — mouth of yours," was the next command, and he felt a rope gag thrust between his teeth.

The man struck a light and Bum recognized the frenzied features of Shorty Dob-

bins. He made Bum dress. Bum tried to remonstrate but the gag prevented. Shorty tied his hands securely behind and shoved him through the door.

"Now, — you, mush," he said as he followed Bum up over the Crater Creek trail.

The wind-swept snow came in blinding gusts as Bum floundered through deep drifts, breaking trail for the little man following with tightly-clutched pistol.

The storm ceased and the heralding lights of dawn found them several miles from town on the ridge that fell away clear from the foot of Crater Peak. Shorty had purposely taken this, the shorter route to his upper camp, and left Old Camp to the west. When just abreast of Old Camp, he called a halt. Bum, exhausted, toppled over in the snow. Shorty stood over him and spoke through clenched teeth.

"There's where I saved your rotten life just six weeks ago," he said, pointing to the dim outline of Crater Peak. "And that's where you're headed for now, back again into the snow-bank I carried you from—but this time you're going to stay there. You told me once that claim-jumping was a killing offense—I'm taking your word for it, and putting you back where I first found you. If you've any prayers in your double-crossing mind you better get them to work."

Bum tried to speak, but the cold, hard-frozen rope in his mouth prevented. With a six-shooter shoved in his back he mushed on, gradually becoming weaker and weaker. Again he fell over, and lay on his back, looking appealingly up at the little man.

Then came the shrill blast of a whistle from the gulch below. Startled, Shorty left his prisoner and waded through the drifts to a point of better view into the gulch. There below lay the cabins of Old Camp. A tall smoke-stack pierced the Winter sky and from it came a long, fluffy black trail of smoke. Shorty scratched his head in wonder. The place had been deserted but a few weeks previous—now cabin doors opened and closed axes rung in the crisp air, and again the whistle shrieked. He dropped his pistol in the snow and ran back to where Bum lay on his back with the slightest semblance of a grin on a tortured face.

With open knife, Shorty slashed the gag and wrist bonds. He lifted Bum to a more comfortable seat against a fallen log and fell to rubbing the man's frozen hands.

"What's the meaning of that, Bum?" he asked, pointing toward the gulch.

Bum smiled wanly.

"That's the Tres Amigos Mining Company—Slade, Fraser and Griggs. They paid me three thousand to show 'em a tunnel you drove—didn't name any one in particular, so I steered 'em to the one you said was no good. I spent some of the money stockin' your upper camp with grub so's it'd be ready for you when they turned you loose."

"And you didn't tell them—show them my upper workings where I made the strike?"

"—no! Didn't you save my life once; didn't I promise you I wouldn't tell a soul? I ain't no piker."

Humiliated beyond expression the little

man sat gazing into the face of the other, his hands trembled, his lips pulsated. Bum struggled to his feet.

"Next time, Shorty, don't muzzle a guy so's he can't talk an' give you the straight dope. If you're through with me I'll try an' make it back to town."

Bum toppled over again. Shorty rushed to his side.

"—if you're going to town. You own a half-interest in the Mother Lode Mine—that's where you're going."

Once more the little man gathered the long gaunt form up in his muscle knotted arms, and walked out over the snow toward where the little cabin peeped through a rift in the white festooned quaking asps.

LEE SHORE

by Harold Willard Gleason

NO MORE to stagger, to spin, to reel,
Trimmed and trig, on an even keel
The dory basks by the Seaman's Home,
And over its thwarts nasturtiums roam—

Do yearnings stir its plankings brown,
As yarns from the shaded porch drift down,
Of Elmo's fire and wild March gales,
Scudding schooners and fighting whales,
Sharp-edged sheath-knife and gleaming fid,
Savory mug-up and steaming kid,
Birds of omen and sharks of prey,
With phrase as keen as the stinging spray?

Its ribs must quiver, it seems to me,
As it rides in that dry Sargossa Sea,
For the slap of wave and the scream of wind
And the foam of a milk-white wake behind,
As the querulous derelicts on the porch
Feed fresh fuel to Memory's torch—
And how it must hate the blossoms that gleam
Where the salt spray spattered in stinging stream!

Djongos

by JOHN SCARRE



Author of "The Dugout Canoe," "A Touch of Fever," etc.

THE two men had eaten heartily of rice and tough dried swine-flesh; and presently old Billy Green produced a trail-worn briar pipe. He filled it deliberately from his leather pouch, leaned back to reach into his pocket for a match-box. Whereupon, without any sign of warning, Fleming whipped out an automatic and shot him through the brain.

Gold, of course, lay back of the crime, so much gold that Fleming's whole being blazed with greed. For more than five months, until now the rainy monsoon was threatening, the partners had toiled here at the boundary between Dutch and British Borneo. Good fortune had smiled beyond their fondest hopes. Each working-hour had left them richer by close to twenty dollars; and every night, as Fleming lay under his mosquito-netting, he had developed his plan to kill Green for the sake of all this wealth.

If his whole being blazed with greed, his determination had been cold enough, implacable. That Green had long been his partner, his only friend, had had no power over his lust for the things gold would buy. This was their first big strike. It spelled affluence—for one man. Average success, equaling the scant rewards of other seasons, would probably have aroused in Fleming no villainous designs; but the more their store had increased the more he had resolved to possess it alone.

And now he did possess it alone. The treachery was accomplished; a job well done. The murderer staggered to his feet, panting heavily like one who has run a long distance. In spite of himself, fascinated, for a full minute his gaze clung to the crumpled form of his victim.

A black spot, red-rimmed, sudden as lightning, had leaped out above Billy Green's eyes. Fleming watched it. His shoulders continued to rise and fall with the inevitable excitement of his act; his knees trembled a little. He thrust out one powerful hand for support on a near-by boulder.

Here, swiftly, his first confusion passed. He laughed harshly, nervously, with a note that approached contempt for Billy Green; then he shoved his gun back into its holster. Just as the obligations of partnership had failed to stay his hand from dastardly work, so, afterwards, his conscience never assailed him. Fleming was not a man to see ghosts.

He was, however, one to guard against realities. Swinging sharply around, he lifted his sun-tanned evil face and strained his ears to catch each whisper of the jungle.

Silence hung thick as the gloom in that haunted spot. Noon had stilled all wilderness sounds. Far overhead the tops of teak and ironwood drew together into a

veritable roof, checking the sun's fierce rays, but retaining the heat as in an oven. On both sides of a winding, dry water-course crowding tree-trunks loomed darkly through tangled undergrowth.

Thirty feet away a diminished stream passed from view along the gravelly creek-bed. Here lay scattered the tools of the two men's labors, just as they had dropped them before starting the noonday meal. And close at hand, beyond the dead man, stood a tent of weather-stained canvas. But Fleming's mind was occupied with other things.

The interval of listening still held him; and after the first short laugh he held his breath as if afraid some sound would escape. Unheeding of the sweat that blinded his small eyes, he was conscious of deep satisfaction as no threat answered the echo of his shot.

"I'll be gone in a half-hour," he muttered, "if that — Djongos keeps away."



YES; there was Djongos to consider. The man felt an involuntary shudder sweep his frame. Brushing his left sleeve across his forehead, he once more gripped the butt of his pistol.

Djongos! Fleming had always hated the brute; feared it, if the truth were admitted. The big grave-visaged orang-outang that Billy Green had reared from babyhood filled him with complete apprehension.

Not that enmity held between them. During the years of Fleming's association with his partner, the ape had never shown resentment or jealousy. Its manner had always been that of a good one-man dog, belonging body and soul to its master, adoring him and accepting all others with a certain dignity and reserve. But Fleming's imagination—not without reason—endowed the beast with almost uncanny intelligence.

Djongos would know!

Djongos had watched the killing of too many deer and pigs not to understand death. The significance of Billy Green's blood-stained body would hardly escape him. He would know, Fleming felt sure, that his master had been murdered; and his long arms, his jaws, had the terrible avenging strength of a squad of men.

Any other human, the man told himself with an oath—a human catching him red-handed even—would bother him but briefly. He was a sure shot. The in-

truder would only follow Billy Green to his death. But Fleming was not so sure of coming safely through an encounter with the orang-outang.

Physically, the murderer was no coward. And there was a sort of ferocity about him that would override any ordinary opposition. Still, he never sought unequal combat. Considering the situation, he found reason enough for not ambushing Djongos, shooting the beast down; then leaving camp at his leisure.

The reason was a matter of armament. Half a year before, when buying supplies at Tarakan on the coast, the partners had had to figure closely. Added to that, their extraordinary good luck had kept them beyond their time in the interior. The result was that they had long since run out of rifle ammunition.

This shortage had caused no actual discomfort or danger. It was not difficult to knock over pigs with their automatics. But Djongos was not a pig. Fleming had seen apes like him fight savagely with a dozen pistol bullets under their hides. And such being the case, he had little stomach to confront Djongos's charge over the lifeless remains of Billy Green.

The idea, then, had been to get his partner alone. This Fleming had done. Djongos was now away hunting for such delicacies as delight the monkey-folk. In half an hour, or an hour, or three hours—there was no knowing just when—the great beast would come swinging back through the trees, shrieking and chattering joyously some forty feet above ground. Before that time Fleming proposed to be well on his way down river.

Half an hour! The murderer knew he would have to hurry. He stepped callously over Billy Green's body and put out his hand to the tent-flap. Then he paused; a look of serious consideration passed over his countenance. Some doubt as to his reception at Tarakan arose to trouble him.

"Can't afford a slip-up," he mused. "My story's got to hold water."

Djongos would know. Fleming could think of no way to avoid that. He must avoid the ape, rather, by flight. But the men of the coast must never know. Billy Green, of course, had succumbed to jungle fever; a natural and not unlikely end. And no one around to disprove the tale. Still—would it not be wiser to bury the body?



FLEMING calculated the time it would take to dig a shallow grave. Such a nicety, he quickly decided, would consume not less than fifteen minutes. Fifteen precious minutes. And to what end? In another week the first flood of the wet moonsoon would sweep all evidence to the crocodiles. The dead man, buried or not, could do him no harm.

So there was nothing to fear but Djongos.

Another interval of listening. No commotion was audible in the surrounding forest. Convinced of his present security, Fleming stooped and entered the tent. One swing of his foot kicked a bamboo camp-cot out of his way; and the maneuver disclosed a row of eight small pig-skin sacks.

Here was the gold, the cause of treachery and violence. These sacks, Fleming knew full well, contained more than a hundred-weight of the precious metal. Half that amount was all a man could manage on one trip down the tortured creek-bed. With two sacks on each forearm, Fleming hurried from the tent.

At the end of two hundred yards downstream the foliage walls fell back. Blinding daylight poured up the creek-bed as into the mouth of a cavern. Directly ahead, fed by the remnant of the creek, lay a narrow river—the Tarakan—its waters yellow with up-land clay.

In haste, and looking neither to right nor left, Fleming plunged into a rank thicket of ferns. Presently he backed out dragging a cumbersome log-canoe.

Another minute and this lay half in the river. The man had already stowed his four sacks of gold in bow and stern; and now he looked to the paddles. Sure of them, he set off at a quick jog back to camp.

His mind estimated the journey to the coast, checked off the equipment he could leave behind. The tent, he told himself, would only add unnecessarily to his burden. With the rains a week off, his blankets would be sufficient. And it came to him with a swift feeling of exultation that he would never again handle shovel or pick or gold pan.

He was rich.

"Rich as a ——— duke," was his satisfied thought. "I'll take the gold," he considered, "and food for four days and a couple of blankets. Two more trips. Then the coast, then Makassar, then Singapore."



FLEMING paddled some six or seven miles that afternoon. Toward night he edged his canoe to the river bank, tied up below a long wooded slope. He ate his supper, but did not go ashore. His plan was to sleep aboard.

Curiously, no worries disturbed him now. His hardened mind had sloughed all memory of his crime. Fear of Djongos had ceased in him. Lying back, he puffed comfortably at his pipe. A brutish contemplation of riotous days and nights in water-front taverns filled all his thoughts; but suddenly——

An ear-splitting shriek in the darkness. A rush on the slope. Something was with Fleming in the canoe, snarling, biting, clutching and tearing. The canoe rocked and pitched as if swept by a hurricane. And Fleming, bellowing in terror, fought back with the courage of a maniac.

It was Djongos. Hairy body, leathery palms and gnashing teeth told the man what manner of thing had attacked him. Iron fingers sank into the flesh of his arms. Djongos had read the signs aright. Savage, loyal, inexorable, he had followed to punish the one who had robbed him of his master.

The ape's strength was amazing, even to Fleming who had observed it more than once. The murderer felt his two wrists seized in a grip he never could loose. It flashed through his maddened senses that Djongos could lift him bodily, hurl him ashore and tear him to pieces. He jerked up his foot to kick the brute away; then the grip shifted to his throat.

This gave Fleming a chance.

He had to work quickly, for his brain reeled and his mouth gaped open under that throttling pressure. Somehow he reached his pistol. His arm lifted. In the black night, seeing nothing, he emptied the contents of a clip into the writhing body that surged against him.

Some stroke of luck worked in Fleming's favor. He never knew what. The ape lost its balance, perhaps, or the pistol wounds frightened it. Perhaps the man threw his antagonist from him in an access of convulsive strength. Anyway, there followed a splash in shallow water.

Half-crazed with fear, the murderer leaped for the line that led ashore. One tug broke it. Ten frantic strokes with the paddle put the canoe in the middle of the river. Then a weakness came over the man.

For an hour he just sat there and drifted, listening to the howling and whimpering ashore. Cold horror clutched with icy talons at the pit of his stomach.

"No sleeping for me," formed at last in his brain. "No sleep. I'll have to watch all the time—unless I killed the brute."

He had not killed Djongos. The howling and whimpering continued all night long, waking the jungle, filling it with unspeakable alarm. Now on one side of the river, now on the other. There were places enough where the ape could swing across. And a realization of this made Fleming keep a sharp watch overhead. He reloaded his pistol and commenced to paddle slowly.

At dawn he saw the ape. It was his first actual view of Djongos since before the murder; and the sight was well-nigh as terrifying as the perilous night encounter.

Djongos was lying in wait. He lurked menacingly on an overhanging branch. If

lay a look of understanding and accusation that was positively human. Fleming swung the canoe wide and hurried on.

A new fear, child of his imagination, came to trouble him. Could Djongos betray him? Could the ape make known his crime to the authorities at Tarakan? Absurd! Fleming tried to shake off the notion. After all, an ape was no more than an ape, a brute beast. And Billy Green's body was lying fifteen miles back in the gloomy water-course.

"It'll rain pretty quick," the murderer assured himself. "The crocs'll get him."

But from then on he took no rest. He did not dare. Djongos, surprisingly, lagged behind the canoe on the long straight stretches. This, Fleming figured, was because of his wounds; yet the man found here no cause for increased confidence. The ape always caught up; it took advantage of every short-cut. Its howling and threatening never lost power. Beyond doubt, it was still too formidable to face.



some movement had not caught Fleming's eye, the orang-ouang had surely dropped into the canoe again. Once more, this time unsteadily, the man emptied his automatic. And Djongos's reception of the fusillade confirmed his belief that the beast could not be hurt.

Upright, raging on the branch, Djongos beat his breast, pounded the wounds on his blood-stained body. His attitude hurled defiance at the moaning bullets.

There seemed to be no diminution of strength in his four feet of reddish-brown fury. Three-inch boughs snapped in his hands as though they were tooth-picks. Nor was that all. Behind the relentless hatred of those piercing black eyes

 FLEMING'S face was haggard in the dawn. The movements of his arms, as he paddled slowly down the Tarakan, were painful and purely mechanical. For the four days and four nights since the murder he had gone without sleep.

Now his lonely vigil was nearly ended. Tarakan village lay two miles ahead, nestling under the palm-trees that silhouetted against the brightening sky. Through the slight low mist the lamps of Chung Lon's all-night tavern flashed a pale-orange welcome. And yet, no sense of relief, no rejoicing came to ease the burden of Fleming's fears.

He would have to wait for the Makassar packet in Tarakan. One day, two, or even a week. Would he be any safer among the dwellings of men, he asked himself, than he had been on the river?

For Djongos was still hot behind him.

And the ape had done more than follow. Resolute, revengeful, it had made of the trip down-stream a hideous nightmare, an interminable period of struggle and suffering and dread. Vaguely, as after a brain-robbing illness, the man could patch together the details that made the whole.

Four days and four nights.

The river had sweltered, a flaming torturing furnace by day, the fearsome abode of horror and agony by night. The fugitive had not dared to relax lest he doze. A

single snatch of sleep, and the current might have driven him ashore into the arms of the watchful orang-outang.

How he had stuck it was past Fleming's understanding. It was simply that he had had to—and he did. Four days and four nights. And at last the canoe's nose bumped against the bamboo landing at Tarakan.

A Javanese policeman, still sleepy after a night of sleep, barefooted and armed with a saber, was on duty along the waterfront. To Fleming, this representative of the law, ludicrous as he was, had an ominous look. Stiffly, almost feebly, the white man clambered out of the canoe.

To hide his apprehension, to steel himself into wakefulness, he snarled at four coolies who were loafing near by. These shouldered his property, exclaiming in wonder over the weight of the pig-skin sacks. Fleming cursed them into silence, and herded them up the plank to the street.

The tavern beckoned him. Almost ill from exhaustion, there was nothing Fleming wanted so much as a stiff drink and a bed. He felt as if he could sleep for days. But he knew better than to try it until after he had got rid of his gold. A hard lot hung out in Chung Lon's place.

"*Kantoor Tuan Residen!*" he snapped at the coolies.

Government servants in the tropics like to get their stint done before the heat of the day. The Resident of Tarakan was no exception. He was at his desk before Fleming arrived with the cortege of coolies. A fat kindly old Dutchman, he offered a pudgy hand and puffed out a courteous welcome.

Fleming told his story. The Resident accepted it without question. Those who live along the shores of Borneo know only too well the ravages of jungle fever.

"A goot man, Pilly Kreen," he declared; "a — goot man. Only too old. It vas sudden, you say?"

Fleming nodded—

"He was sick only three days.

"Too old," the Resident repeated. "Ven dey are old dey gan not stand de yungle. Much petter to sit in Tarakan en trink *jenever*. En you, *mynheer*? You go away from here now?"

"Yes. I've got enough. I was wondering if I could leave this gold with you until the packet comes along?"

"Until tomorrow? Sure; to be sure. Tomorrow in de forenoon comes de *Pieter Both*. En here is de gold? H'm! A goot haul you haf made, *mynheer*. Fifty-five, sixty t'ousand *gulden*, *niet waar?*"

"About that," Fleming agreed; "only half of it's Billy Green's. I'll find his people in the States. He's got a son or a daughter—I'm not sure. Philadelphia, I think. The consul at Makassar can tell me."

The Dutchman beamed; and Fleming enjoyed an inward sneer at the old man's credulity.

"Excellent! Excellent!" came generous praise. "You are de goot man, *Mynheer Fleming*."

He took the eight sacks of gold and put them for safe keeping in his ponderous iron strong-box. Fleming could call for his property before boat-time the following morning. The American made ready to go; then it struck him that he would be acting wisely to report the trouble he had had with Djongos.

The Resident showed concern but no surprize at the recital of the ape's pursuit. Fleming gave his opinion that Djongos had become crazed at the loss of his master. This seemed likely; the Resident had always regarded orang-outangs as treacherous, tricky pets at best.

"Vat a fool, Pilly Kreen, to keep sooch an animal!"

"I told him time and again to get rid of Djongos," Fleming made known; "but he wouldn't do it. The brute gave me —. I'll feel a lot better when I climb aboard the *Pieter Both*."

"Ho!" laughed the Dutchman. "You vill be safe enough in Tarakan. I shall issue de varrant for Djongos, de svine-ape! My policemen vill run him t'rough mit de *klewangs*. Goot-by, *mynheer*, et goot luck to you."



ON THE way back to Chung Lon's tavern Fleming laughed at the easy time he had of it. His mirth brought a measure of reassurance. The sun climbed higher. Tarakan, girding itself for the day, looked peaceful and safe. His uneasiness, the murderer told himself, was born of his weariness. All he needed was a good sleep.

There were no prospectors or traders abroad so early. No one questioned Fleming. Chung Lon served him a stinging

brandy-and-soda and showed him to a small room above the bar. The white man gave strict orders to be let alone for twenty-four hours; then he locked and bolted his door.

The room had one window; and, as is always the way in that country, the window was furnished with heavy, wooden shutters. Inside the shutters was a grating of five-eighths mild steel bars. After a moment of indecision Fleming closed and fastened the shutter. He had to, anyway, he excused himself, in order to keep out the sunlight. But furthermore, he inspected his pistol and tied it securely to his wrist.

Sleep claimed him before he finished unlacing his boots.

Sometime later the echo of a crash awoke him. Not the crash itself, but a distant recollection of a more distant disturbance. For a time he lay still, dull from the slumber that had held him.

There was no more noise; but presently Fleming became aware that the room was lighter than it should be. He craned his neck to look toward the window—and the shock of what he saw jerked him out of his semistupor. With a hoarse cry [he surged from the bed, made one dive to the door that led below.

The bolt stuck under his trembling fingers. So, in fear lest he be gripped from behind, Fleming whirled around and started firing.

Djongos crouched in the window. The ape had ripped the shutter from its hinges. Now one black hand was pushing aside a bar, bending it as if it were made of wood. A bowl of pain and rage answered the thunder of Fleming's pistol.

But Djongos stuck to his post.

He bent another bar. With a curious swift movement he slipped through to the floor. The man stood almost petrified. All he could do was curse himself for a fool for taking the room he had always used before, the room Djongos knew. He dared not try the bolt again; and his bullets continually failed of effect.

But no. Djongos could not stand erect. He tried it once, and fell; tried it again, and fell. Fleming's heart gave a little leap. One of his bullets had found a mark, piercing both legs and crippling the ape.

The man's courage returned. He shoved in a fresh clip and deliberately leveled his pistol. Djongos set up a furious roar of

hate. For a third time he tried to gather his legs under him; but they gave way. He fell with a growl, spoiling Fleming's aim; and he lay twisting and thrashing on the floor, biting at the boards in his fury.

Then suddenly, he dragged himself swiftly forward on his arms.

Fleming fired as fast as he could. The room was full of the thunder of the explosions. Back to the door, the man looked down into the ape's black countenance. One more shot, with the steadiness of desperation. It must have struck home, for Djongos dropped quivering at his enemy's feet; then lay very still.

A coolness came upon Fleming. Without moving an inch from where he stood, he reloaded his pistol. Having done so, he riddled Djongos' body with bullets. And as he fired, he cursed; a vast satisfaction filled his being. He cursed the beast so loud and so long that for a minute he was unaware of a knocking at the door behind him.

When he hailed, Chung Lon answered. Fleming knocked back the bolt with the butt of his pistol.

His impulse was to curse the Chinese, take him to task for not watching better over his lodgers. But something on the tavern keeper's face compelled attention.

"*Tuan Residen ada dibawah.*"

"Down stairs? What does he want?"

"He asks to speak with Tuan Fleming."

Fleming said nothing. It was strange, unbelievable, that Chung Lon was making no comment on the shooting, was regarding the ape's body with complete indifference. What was up now?

What could be up?

Nothing! Djongos was dead. Billy Green was dead—and seventy miles away. Nothing could touch the murderer. He was safe; his secret was safe. Without a word he went ahead of Chung Lon to the stairs.



THE bar was crowded. It was now afternoon, and the setting sun slanted through a window to strike fire from the Resident's shoulder ornaments. Fleming faced the official, wondered at the sternness of the old man's face.

The Dutchman did not speak. He pointed.

Through a silent lane of men, in the direction indicated, Fleming saw the bedraggled body of Billy Green.

Billy Green! How was it possible? There had been no other prospectors in the region of their gold-strike. Surely no one could have found the body and brought it in so quickly. But there it was!

"De ape prought it in," came heavily from the Resident.

Djongos! In an instant Fleming understood. That was why the brute could not keep up with the slow-moving canoe. It was carrying its master.

Fleming could only stand and stare.

The black bullet wound in Billy Green's forehead gaped accusingly.

Guilt leaped to Fleming's face.

A sign from the Resident; two impassive policemen shuffled to the murderer's side.

"You go in de *Pieter Both*," he heard; "but you go in de chains. You vill wait for a time in Makassar chail. En de gold I shall keep. I shall keep it vor Pilly Kreen's beople until de consul can find dem. Dat is all."

INDIANS AND EAGLE FEATHERS

by Alanson Skinner

THE sight of the average fancy calendar showing a beautiful Indian maiden in a canoe with an eagle feather thrust in her raven locks moves most old-time Indians to laughter, and some almost to tears, for among nearly all tribes of the forests and plains the eagle feather was assumed only by a man who had proved his valor in battle, and almost never by a woman, unless, indeed, she had slain an enemy.

Among the Eastern or Santee Sioux at least, the following customs were in vogue:

First, if a man touched a living enemy he was entitled to the honor of the first coup. He was then permitted to wear an eagle feather standing upright on the back of his head. The second, third and fourth war honors were accorded to the next three men to touch an enemy, in decreasing importance. A person who took a scalp did an honorable thing, but it was not considered equal to counting any one of the four coups allowed. A man who counted a coup and took a scalp received only the credit for the coup. He was entitled to wear an eagle plume as having counted a coup, in other words, and the scalp merely added to his prestige.

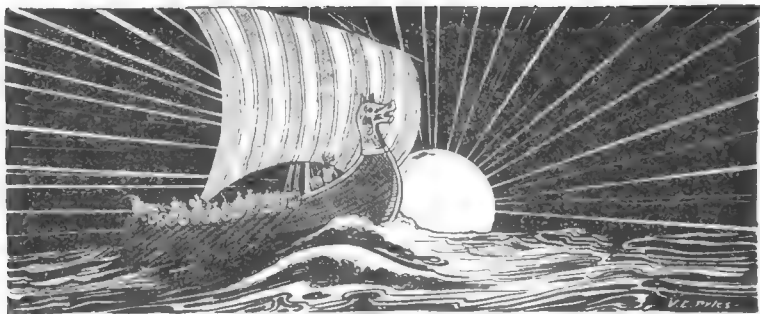
If a man succeeded in getting into the very camp of the enemy he was entitled

to wear an elaborate war-bonnet of eagle feathers, but a woman, even if she had accomplished one of the above deeds, and had the right to own an eagle feather, was debarred by custom from wearing it. Instead she usually gave it to a male relative to wear for her.

In this connection it is of interest to observe that the great war-bonnets worn by distinguished men among the prairie tribes, such as the Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa and others, were unknown east of the Mississippi River in early times. Fillets of fur, roaches woven of deer and porcupine hair, or their own shaven heads were in vogue in the forest.

In modern times popular white opinion has literally forced all Indians to adopt the war-bonnet and the scalp shirt as a sort of "Tuxedo," and they may now be seen in many places where they are historically very inaccurate.

Whenever you see a picture of the sale of Manhattan Island, or of the purchase of the site of Philadelphia by Penn, in which the natives are shown wearing eagle feather war-bonnets, with Buffalo hide teepees in the background, you may feel assured that it is on a par with an ideal picture of the signing of the Magna Carta in which King John is dressed in a Moslem turban, and the crowd in Swedish and Russian garb.



Swain's Payment

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "Swain's Venture," "Swain's Chase," etc.

IN THE days when Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald ruled jointly in the Orkneyar there was a bondi named Swain Olaf's son, who dwelt in isle Gairsey and held broad lands, too, in Caithness on the Scots main. He was a very famous man and a wealthy and noted for the valorous deeds which he performed. The scalds said of him that he was the greatest man in the North of those who held no title, and because of the part which he played in politics in the Islands the common men called him "Jarl-Maker," and whenever he went viking-faring the Orkney youths would clamor for bench-room in his longships and other chiefs were blithe to serve under him.

All his life he was at feud with another Orkneyman named Olvir Rosta¹ who was grandson to Frakork the Witch, for these two had been the bane of Swain's father and mother and his two brothers. Frakork Swain burned in the beginning of their disagreement, and likewise he procured the outlawing of Olvir; but despite all his efforts he could never attain his enemy's death. Up and down the world the two men followed each other, and all whom they met they dragged into their quarrel, Kings and Jarls and chiefs equally with ordinary warriors. Theirs was a red path, what with the bloodshed and the burning.

It was Swain's custom to bide at home in Gairsey and Caithness during the Winters, administering his properties and consulting over the government of the Islands with the two Jarls, who regarded him higher than any other man in their dominions. In the Spring he would see to the planting, and so soon as this was attended to he would shove out his longships, summon his men and sail wherever the plunder was best or he had last heard of Olvir's presence. He called this Spring-viking.

Unless he was engaged in one of his pursuits of Olvir he never failed to return to the Orkneys in time for the harvest; but so soon as the crops were under cover he would launch his longships once more and fare overseas as occasion served, capturing shipping or raiding alongshore. He called this Autumn-viking, and his name was a watch-word of fear all through the Sudreyar,¹ Ireland,² Bretland,³ Scotland, Valland and Galland,⁴ Spainland, yes, and beyond. Men said that not since Ragnar Lodbrok was any Norseman more feared than he.

His stead on Gairsey was very commodious and fair to see, and he had always a numerous company surrounding him—so many as eighty men he kept in attendance. His skalli was as handsome as a prince's, and his drinking-hall was the largest in those parts. Under sheds on the strand he had

¹ Roysterer.

¹ Hebrides. ² Ireland. ³ Britain. ⁴ Parts of France.

his great dragon *Deathbringer* and four other longships, and at Dungsbae in Caithness he maintained a second fleet of *snekkes*—cutters—and barges for traffic back and forth between the Islands and the main.

Among those in attendance upon him the most prominent were his forecandleman, Erik Skallagrim's son, who was Iceland-born and who went usually by the name of "Crooked Legs;" and his two scalds, Armod the Scald and Oddi the Little. These three dwelt with him constantly. Erik had come to him in his early years what time he had dwelt a while as King in Man, having wed Ingrid who was Queen over that island, an ill-mannered wench, of whom he had small gain, save for the twin sons she bore him. Afterward he shut her up in a nunnery of the Syllangar, and there she lived out her days.

The two scalds were come into his service but two years past at the time this tale opens. It happened in this wise: Swain had had tidings that Olvir Rosta was gone to Mikligard,* and he fared thither in company with Erling Skakki—Wrynecked—who was a great lenderman† of Norway and a close friend to King Ingi, who ruled over the third of the realm, his brothers King Sigurd and King Eystein sharing equally in it with himself; and Eindridi Ungi, who once had been chief of the Varangian Guard of the Greek Emperor and was returning to Mikligard with recruits for the Varangs. And the scalds had attached themselves to Swain's train for the journey and had conducted themselves so gallantly in the various encounters and battles which occurred that neither they nor Swain could bear to be parted thereafter.

It fell out upon this expedition that although Swain succeeded in driving Olvir from Mikligard he was unable to catch up with the outlaw, and so was obliged to return to the Orkneys. But in the following Spring he had word that Olvir had been seen afar in the Western Ocean, bearing up for Greenland, and nothing would content Swain but that he should fare westward in pursuit of Olvir. Yet so powerful was Olvir's name among the evil-minded in the North that there did not lack for one to carry a warning to him of Swain's intent, and when Swain reached Greenland it was to learn that Olvir had fared on west and

south for Wineland the Good, which was a country well-nigh at the world's end and which few men other than Icelanders or Greenlanders had visited.

In Swain's company, however, was a man named Kolbiorn Jon's son, who was Orkney-born and who had formerly traded to Wineland; and with Kolbiorn's guidance, Swain and his folk succeeded in reaching Wineland the Good and even tracked down Olvir and joined battle with him, but in the very moment of Olvir's destruction the Skraelings fell upon the two parties, and in the fighting and confusion which followed Olvir was able to make his escape in a manner which has been set down in detail elsewhere.

Swain pursued him as best he could, but the end of that business was that Olvir got clean away, and all that remained for Swain to do was to return home, content with the honors he had won by faring westward beyond any other man since Leif Erik's son and Thorfinn Karlsefni first had visited the Skraelings' Coast.

But there was much bruit and talk about the wondrous deeds which Swain had performed on these two expeditions. The scalds Armod and Oddi were swift to sing his fame, and other scalds and merchants and travelers and noblemen, who journeyed for pleasure from place to place, carried the reports of what they and others of Swain's company had told, and very soon there was not a court or a skalli in the North where the events of the Mikligard voyage and the Wineland venture were not matters of common knowledge. Men repeated these and earlier tales of Swain's prowess to their sons, and bade them learn how to conduct themselves as great warriors and honorable men and chieftains of worth from the deeds therein set forth.

It became so that Kings hungered for a sight of Swain and a more intimate acquaintance with what he had done, and frequent were the invitations he received to journey to this court or that court. But Swain was never a man to put himself out for any other in order to conciliate his own vanity. Heavy he was of hand, and rough of tongue; and he said what he thought to whoever happened to be in front of him, rich man or poor man, nobleman or thrall.

"What King can improve my lot?" he would argue when Jarl Rognvald or Jarl Harald or some other one would urge that

*Constantinople. †Baron.

he accept an invitation. "I am what I am, and what I am Swain made me. Kings may bide for all of me."

Yet in the Spring following his return from the Wineland venture he received an invitation which he did accept, and from his acceptance resulted an affair which was afterward little less discussed than his previous exploits. And the manner of its happening was thus:



HE WAS standing on Gairseystrand, watching the shipwrights at work on his craft when Erik Crooked Legs came to him from the skalli.

"A messenger from Norway, Swain," said the Icelfander. "He is come over Aurrida Firth from Orpbir in Hrossey."

"Humph," growled Swain. "If he is another King's messenger, fill him to the chin with ale and pack him off. What do you think of *Deathbringer's* mast?"

Erik ignored the question.

"He comes from a King, Swain, it is true, but——"

"Which King, little man?"

"Ingi. But he comes also from Erling Skakki."

"Ha," said Swain, "that is a bird of a different feather. What errand has he?"

"He told me naught, save that he comes from Erling, with a message on Ingi's behalf."

"At least, the carl is not a sputter-talker," answered Swain. "Well, I will go to him, but do you bide here, Erik, and make certain the shipmen step that mast so it will stand a two-reef breeze."

He tramped up to the skalli and found the messenger at the high table, eating beef and drinking the ale which the serving-varlets had set before him.

"So you are from Erling?" said Swain. "Humph! I do not remember your face among those who used to attend him. Have you recently come into his service?"

"I am not really in his service, Swain," replied the man—he was a pleasant-spoken, open-faced fellow, quite young. "I serve his uncle Solmund, whom men call 'the Wise.'"

"And what is your name?"

"I am called Havard Hrolf's son."

"Well, Havard Hrolf's son, who serve Solmund and also Erling, how comes it that you are here?"

Havard smiled good-temperedly at this baiting.

"I am come to you with a message from Erling, Swain, on behalf of the King—Ingi."

"It is useless for you to deliver it, if Ingi wishes me to come and tell him what any scald can repeat for him," snarled Swain.

Havard grinned.

"Erling warned me that so you would answer me when first I spoke, Swain. And it is true that Ingi called him and bade him send you word that he would have you at the court to tell what you had seen and heard and done in——"

"The message you will carry will not be difficult to remember," interrupted Swain. "I recollect, myself, how churlish was Ingi when I last saw him in Bergen the time Erling decided he would accompany me to Mikligard. I had naught from the King then but complaints and threats because Erling desired to go with me, and two of his scalds, also."

"Ingi will speak you fair now, Swain," returned Havard. "One reason he desires to see you is that he is coming to open enmity with his brothers, and he needs the aid and advice of every chief he can secure."

Swain snorted his contempt.

"I doubt it not! Well, Ingi means no more to me than do either Sigurd or Eystein. I owe naught to any King."

"There was talk of fitting reward for you, if——"

"Reward! You do not know me or you would not talk so! I take what rewards I seek. None gives them to me."

Havard shifted uncomfortably.

"But here is a King who says he wishes much to honor you, Swain. He would hear, himself, from your own mouth of the deeds you have performed and the strange sights you have seen. And, beside that, he wishes to consult with you how he shall maintain the realm of Norway in peace and comfort and how, too——"

"Let him ask others," said Swain brusquely. "The plain truth is, Havard, that I was put to considerable loss upon my last venture, and I am going viking-faring in the richest quarters to make up for that. And, furthermore, whatever I do I must keep an eye out for Olvir Rosta."

Havard grinned again.

"I see plainly that I must shoot the bolt Erling bade me keep to the last," he said.

Swain buried his teeth in a slice of meat from the platter on the table.

"And what was that?" he demanded.

"Why, this! Erling would have me tell you that he is recently wed to the Princess Kristin, daughter to King Sigurd the Jorsala-farer,* and that by this step he is drawn into the intrigues and disputes between the Three Kings."

"The more fool he," rasped Swain. "To wed any woman—and if he must wed, to pick a King's daughter. Bah!"

"Be that as it may," said Havard, laughing, "wed he is. And now he has a big stake in the land. He adjures you by me that in the name of your friendship——"

"How many swords will he have?" asked Swain abruptly.

"Swords?" repeated Havard, bewildered.

"Yes, yes, carl! How many men does he need?"

"Oh, I see! Then you——"

"No friend ever appealed to Swain in want, and was not answered," frowned Swain. "Give your message, man! Give your message! I can raise a few hundred stout carls, myself, and if there is need I think I can win Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald and a few more to aid us."

Havard offered him a hand still greasy with the meat.

"Ho, Swain, it is indeed true—what men say of you! You are one to count upon in the weapon-showing. But you read into my words more than was intended. Erling's need at this time is not weapons but counsel."

"And what is Ing's need?" queried Swain shrewdly.

"The same."

"Has Erling cast in his lot with Ing?" pressed Swain.

Havard drew circles in the ale-lees on the table-top.

"No, then," he answered finally, "but I think you had best ask Erling that question, yourself. But I will say this much: He and Solmund have debated long how they should push their fortunes to most advantage in the hour of conflict."

Swain rose from the seat into which he had flung himself upon entering.

"You do well to say no more," he growled. "One other question—no, two. Why did Ing send for me?"

"Of his own will, Swain," replied Havard eagerly. "Erling but seized advantage of the opportunity to secure your presence

without suspicion. For all Norway is wrapped in suspicion these days."

"Humph! Is there haste? And should I carry with me a small company or large?"

"There is haste, and Erling bade me to say that he would prefer that you come with a single ship."

Havard hesitated.

"Go on, go on!" ordered Swain.

"You knew that Olvir was with King Eystein?"

Swain's powerful fingers gripped the table-edge until their tips went white.

"So!" he whispered. "With Eystein! And where——"

"They move about, Swain. No man can predict where they will bide, especially now that Summer is at hand. For Ing suspects Sigurd and Eystein, and Eystein and Sigurd suspect Ing, yes, and one another."

"Here is no occasion to carry with me a single ship," said Swain. "It had better be every man I can arm."

But Havard shook his head.

"Not so. As I have said, Swain, a large company would create suspicion. The word would fly from the Fjords to the Upplands that the Orkney-folk were at hand to espouse Ing's cause, and that would mean arming and riding and boating, right and left. And we should be forced into Ing's faction, when perhaps——"

"Ha! You say truth," admitted Swain. "But if Olvir is in Norway, and I have with me but a single ship's company——"

"You may rely upon every man Erling and Solmund and their friends can raise," cried Havard. "And I do not speak in your despite when I say that will be a more numerous company than you will find in the whole of the Orkneyar and the Norse lands westward."

"That is sober sense," agreed Swain. "So be it! We will sail on the morning's tide."

II



THAT day Swain called up his house-carls and summoned his tenants until by nightfall he had secured six-score strong men and lusty for *Death-bringer's* crew; and all day and all night on the strand the mallets of the shipmen pounded and the riggers hauled and spliced and the calkers crawled along the shapely hull making the bottom tight.

In the evening, as Havard the messenger

* Jerusalem-farer, i. e., Crusader.

was sitting by the skalli-fire listening to the tales told by Armod and Oddi to a wide circle of open-eyed home-stayers, Swain went in search of Erik. He found the Ice-lander in his berth, muttering a rune the while he polished his ax-head.

"All to no purpose, Erik," quoth Swain, standing in the doorway. "We do not sail on any weapon-clashing errand."

"He is a wise man who knows when his weapon must work," answered Erik, polishing away at the ax-head. "It is seldom you fare overseas, and the war-birds go hungry."

"That is as may be," said Swain. "But so far as you are concerned, little man, what you say does not apply. For it is my purpose to leave you at home to see that the crops are properly sown, the fisheries tended and the kine increased."

Erik dropped the ax betwixt his feet.

"Never, Swain! You would not put such a slight upon me."

"It is no slight, but a trust. Look you, here I am called to Bergen to consult with Erling and King Ingi and I know not who else. It will be word-fighting we do, and naught else."

"Be not too sure," advised Erik again.

Swain made an impatient gesture.

"I am as sure as a man can be. In Norway trouble breeds apace. Three Kings divide the land, three brothers who are in no wise brotherly. Erling must decide which way his fortunes can best be served, and he wishes my advice to guide him. In that you cannot help me—else be sure I would carry you with me, little man, although my properties went to ruin. I will never leave you behind in the hour when the shields crash together."

"I like it not," answered Erik disagreeably. "My place is on *Deathbringer's* fore-castle, and——"

"In battle, yes. But now you can serve me better by biding at home, and winning as many silver marks as possible from my lands. If there is to be fighting in Norway we shall be drawn into it, and every man and weapon will be required before the last of the Einherjar are through Valhalla's gates. The day comes, I say; but not yet. In Bergen we shall talk of how many chiefs each King can count upon, and how the different districts feel, what the priests will say, which merchants can lend the most money. Oh, I know well how it will go!

If you were there you must do no more than sit in Unna's inn and quaff ale and keep open ears."

"And that last would be good service," Erik struck in.

"True! I have never met the man could match horns with that shrunken belly of yours. And if I had my way you should come; but against what you could do for me in Bergen I range what you can accomplish at home. We lost three-score and ten stout carls on the Wineland venture, and no booty to pay the man-bote with. I must wring every mark I can get from my farms, and all the more so because the war-clouds are ruddy in the east."

"Enough," growled Erik. "It is in no way to my liking, and if any man seeks to jest at me I——"

"You shall fasten fish-hooks in his bowels and drag him astern of a ten-oared *snekke*," said Swain. "But here you must bide, Erik, and watch over my sons. Olvir Rosta is in Norway, and it is always possible he might foray to the Islands to wreck what injury he might upon me—as he did a few Summers back when he slew Asleif, my mother."

"True talk," assented Erik. "I may not dispute it, Swain, but if by any chance the war-horns sound, I pray you send me a swift message, and I will put the younglings in Jarl Rognvald's care and raise every man who can find shield and sword to come to you."

"It shall be so," promised Swain.

In the morning he went aboard *Deathbringer* with his people, and they rowed out by Gjaness, and north between Eidey and Strionsey and so through the gut that is bounded by the islet of Kalfrs and Sandey. Rinanseý presently lay to starboard, and they dashed the waters to foam with the thrust of sixty oars, hasting northward, ever northward. Evening carried them to lonely Fridarey, and here they anchored for the night. The next day they crossed the turbulent currents of the Dynrost, and spent the hours of darkness in a harbor of Mosey in the Hjaltilands. The third day they headed east across the ocean for Norway.

When the wind blew fair they sailed, and when it was contrary or feeble they rowed. Kolbiorn Jon's son—he who had guided Swain on the Wineland venture—took Erik's place as fore-castle man, and the

scalds Armod and Oddi attended Swain on the poop, with Havard the messenger. They were a brave company, six-score folk, without counting the chiefs and the scalds. And like all of Swain's companies, albeit there was no gilt on their helms or silvering



in their mail, they were well accoutered, each man in complete suit of mail or *pantzer*,* as suited his taste, with shield, spear and ax or sword, and two-score with bows and arrows instead of spears. Of the dragon *Deathbringer* it was said that she was the most famous craft and the most dreaded since the *Long Serpent*, aboard which King Olaf Tryggvi's son sailed to his death in the sea-fight off Svold. Black she was all over her hull and the figurehead was green, with red eyes, and the tail that curled over the stern green also.

They made a speedy voyage, and entered Bergen haven in the middle of an afternoon; and all the folk on the shipping and the quay-side, outland folk and Norse folk, came running when the word was passed that Swain's dragon was in sight.

"Rather would I see her here than on the

* Plate armor.

open sea," cried many an Easterling or Englishman.

"Where Swain goes trouble blows," quoted the Norse-folk, and they shook their heads fearfully.

Swain saw to it that *Deathbringer* was anchored securely, with sufficient space to handle her in, and then he made over the command to Kolbiorn, and went ashore in company with Havard and the two scalds, bidding the forecandleman keep every other carl aboard, lest the wilder spirits should fall to drinking and brawling in the ale-shops and taverns.

Hundreds of men watched from the strand as he tied his small-boat to a wharf, and climbed to the shore, but Swain paid no attention to them.

"So far our journey has been my concern, Havard," he said. "Now it is for you to lead."

"Erling bade me wait in Unna's tavern if— Ha, here he is, Swain!"

The seamen and merchantfolk split their ranks to make way for a man in rich garments, unarmored, who came striding down from the town, his string of house-carls hurrying to keep pace with him. He was tall and strongly-made, and had a long ugly face with sharp features; and his appearance was further marred by the wound from which he had his nickname, Wrynecked—a sword-stroke had severed the muscles of neck and shoulder, so that when they finally healed his head was carried over on one side.

"Ho, Swain," he cried. "Well-met, old viking! I see that you have not forgotten me. You are prompter than I had expected."

"No friend ever called for me twice," rumbled Swain.

Erling clapped him on the back.

"By the Old Gods, as you swear—but let not the priests hear us!—I will wager my head on that. Havard, you sped your message well. I shall render good report of you to Solmund. And here are my comrades, Armod and Oddi. Scalds, I greet you! We four, who fared to Mikligard, may yet embark upon a mightier venture, eh? But we will talk of this later. Come with me to Unna's tavern, and wash the salt of the sea-winds from your mouths."

The townfolk yielded place for them, and they set their feet to the street that ascended from the strand, Swain and Erling in the lead, Havard and the scalds after them, and Erling's house-carls last of all.

Swain pointed to a cluster of longships and *snekkes* in the haven; a flutter of scarlet cloaks showed on their poops and fore-castles.

"Ingi is here, I perceive," he remarked.

"Yes," assented Erling, with a quick look at him. "But you are a changed man, Swain, if you clamor to be led before any King the moment you set foot on land."

"Ingi and all his kind are no more to me than tools to work my will withal," returned Swain serenely. "As for Ingi, himself, I have small use for him, seeing that the one time we met he was inclined to churlishness. If I had better knowledge of his brothers, or either one of them I would never think to aid him, although you begged it of me."

"What do you know of Sigurd and Eysteinn?" asked Erling.

"Naught, save what men say."

"And what do they say—the men that you have heard?" Erling insisted.

Swain considered.

"Why, that Sigurd is ungovernable in his temper, a deep drinker and restless, while Eysteinn is prudent and capable, but stingy and avaricious and forever seeking his own advantage—for which last inclination I do not blame him, seeing that it is common with all men who are worth their salt."

Erling nodded.

"Common gossip is more often than not common truth. Both these Kings I know somewhat myself, and I should pass the same judgment upon them that other men do. But how of Ingi? Dismiss from your mind the fact that the one time you met him he irritated you. That aside—what is his repute?"

Swain looked puzzled.

"What is this that you seek, Erling?" he demanded. "Did you send to the Orkneys for me to come to Norway to ask me what other men say of the three Kings?"

"Not so," denied Erling, laughing. "There is much more in the wind—but I think I might be held excused even had I sent for you with no greater purpose in view, seeing that there is not a man in Norway but would gladly give ear to your counsel in any issue in dispute. And this issue which comes to a head month by month in our midst is no less than the determination of who shall reign over Norway. Three Kings cannot reign long in peace, that much is certain."

"It is the truth," agreed Swain soberly.

"In the Orkneys we contrive to have two Jarls, because by so doing the boendr are insured against the rapacity of one powerful ruler; but I think a King must be different. Two Kings or three Kings in a country are so many sources of aggravation, for a King to be a King must be powerful."

"Powerful," repeated Erling. "Humph! Perhaps. And what of Ingi?"

"Well, I hold him womanish of face," said Swain, "and he is no warrior, with the lump he has on his back, and one foot shorter than the other."

"But judge not his spirit by his face or his body," put in Erling. "He has no fear of pain or death, that I know. And for his crippling, he had it because when he was first King, and he a fatherless babe scarce a year old, Thjostolf Ala's son, the banner-bearer, carried him in his belt throughout the fight at Mynne."

"He began too young as a warrior," commented Swain. "You speak in his favor, then?"

Erling was silent until they came to the great, high-roofed skalli which was Unna's tavern, wherein the noblemen and chiefs were wont to stay when they came to Bergen on business or to attend the King's court.

"I speak in his favor, yes," he said; "but I am not certain that I would do more—or even so much, under certain circumstances. There is a good deal to be said for Ingi. He will listen to advice nowadays, and he is generous with his friends. But as you say, whatever his spirit he himself is no warrior, and he could never hold the weak stretch in a shield-wall."

"Well, well, we will discuss this at greater length when we have a roof over us, and can guard surely against flapping ears."

As they were entering the gate of the skalli's outer yard a second procession was coming forth from Unna's drinking-hall, and the chief at the head of the group of house-carls and serving varlets stood to one side with a savage frown of impatience to await the passage of Erling's folk. Erling saw this, and he turned aside to speak with the other chief, plucking Swain by the arm in token that the Orkneyman should follow him.

"I am just returned from the strand with my friend Swain Olaf's son, who has stopped off to visit me on a viking-cruise from the Orkneyar," he said pleasantly. "Is it your fortune to be acquainted with him?"

The other chief's frown had gradually

left his face as Erling spoke, and at mention of Swain's name it was supplanted by a pleased smile. He was a square-shouldered man, with a craggy, beaked face.

"No, I have not the pleasure to know Swain," he answered, "but I know well his reputation, which is envied by all honorable men."

Swain said naught to this nor did his face change a line of its impassive mask, for of all things he hated most to be praised publicly. Erling, who knew this, was secretly amused; but he made haste to introduce the two, evidently with intent to conciliate the chief whose exit he had unintentionally barred from the skalli yard.

"This is Jon Petr's son, Swain," he said. "He is a great lenderman in the Sogn district and very highly considered by King Sigurd."

Swain offered Jon an enormous hand.

"You have the look of a warrior, Jon," he said. "What is your favorite weapon?"

"I have no favorite," replied the Sogn man. "It is my belief that a warrior should be able to fight with any or all weapons."

"Humph," grunted Swain. "No shipwright ever mastered the cooper's trade."

"I am still in life," retorted Jon.

"Have you risked it often?"

"I have slain three men in *holmgang** and perhaps a score otherwise. Can you better that, Swain?"

"I have never kept count of the men I have slain," replied Swain with a touch of contempt.

Now, the principal of Jon's attendants, a ferret-faced man with streaky black hair, pushed forward.

"It is well known throughout Norway," he said, "that Jon Petr's son is the foremost champion of Sogn and Hordaland, nor has his better been found from one end to the other of the three Kings' dominions."

"And who are you?" asked Swain.

"He is Brynjulf, my steward," replied Jon. "A faithful servant, but quick of tongue."

"So much is to be seen," observed Swain, and he passed on without another word, and Erling perforce went with him, Jon and his folk glaring after the two.

"There is none like you to put down the glib-tongued rogues, Swain," said Erling.

"Jon has the build of a warrior," said Swain indifferently, "but it may be he accounts himself too highly. He who has fought

only in Norway little knows what fighting may be—as you and I have learned."

"True! But I was thinking more of the steward. A proud master ever acquires a loud-mouthed following."

"Oh, that belch of wind!" growled Swain. "He is of no more consequence than the air he obstructs. Let us talk of something worth while."

Yet it was to fall out that Brynjulf was of more consequence than he merited, and upon him and a certain ill deed he wrought great events revolved, affecting first of all his master and afterward folk mightier than he had ever dreamed of influencing with his miserable life.

III



WHEN they entered the drinking-hall of the tavern Erling bade Havard entertain the two scalds while he and Swain withdrew to a private chamber he had engaged.

"For I do not think we shall go to King Ingi before the morrow," he added.

"Tomorrow or never, it is all one," answered Swain. "But why must we be so secret? The common-table is good enough for me."

Erling stood aside to permit him to enter the door of the private room, a bare recess beneath the low eaves of the skalli roof, with a bunk-bed at one side, a pallet opposite and a single window high up in the outer wall. There were rushes on the floor, and two rude chairs.

"Ah, but you are not wed to a princess," rejoined Erling, carefully fastening the door behind him.

"And for that I am sufficiently thankful. Princess or farm-wench, all women are the same. When they are not in trouble they hunger and plot for it, and so soon as they have started trouble they wish for more. The only wife I had I put where she might not annoy me, and I counsel you to do the same."

Erling smiled at this.

"Your opinion of women is well known, Swain," he said. "And perhaps your experience with the one you wed was of a kind to give you every reason to suspect all of the sex. Nevertheless, I seem to remember that you are equally noted for your pride in your sons, and——"

"Sons!" snapped Swain. "Of course, a man must have sons. How else shall he

* Single combat on an island.

carry on his name, and insure the rightful disposition of his property—or the prosecution of his feuds?”

“True,” agreed Erling. “And it is for that reason, Swain, that I wed Kristin Sigurd’s daughter. I am of a mind to rule Norway one day, even as you rule the Orkneys.”

“I do not rule the Orkneys,” replied Swain sharply.

“So you say! But other men say differently, even the two Jarls. I remember well how Jarl Rognvald told me in jest—that was half-serious—how no Jarl could last long in the Islands if he had your ill will.”

“That is a different matter from ruling by Jarl’s right,” objected Swain.

“Different—and yet not so different. At any rate, it is the only kind of rule which is open to me in Norway, for I am not of royal birth. And the day has gone by when a lenderman, however good his family or great his ability, can win the Norse folk to grant him a crown. Royal blood he must have—as witness Eystein, whose mother never wore wedding-ring or stood before the priest with King Harald Gillchrist, but who is reckoned as much a King as either Ingi or Sigurd, who came of reputable folk on the distaff side. I tell you, Swain, it matters not who the mother or the father may be, so long as the child is royal through the other parent.”

“Humph!” grunted Swain. “Then your intention is to——”

“My intention,” exclaimed Erling swiftly, “is to get me a son who shall win to a single throne in Norway.”

“Ah, but will he stay there?”

“That is for me—and I hope, too, for you—to make certain.”

Swain played with his dagger-hilt.

“This is a pleasant task to which you usher me,” he remarked. “I am to win a kingdom for a King unborn! Is that it?”

“It is,” replied Erling. “He travels farthest who first discovers the road ahead. Yet nonetheless is it true that it was not my purpose to fetch you here to discuss such far-off matters tonight. There are many steps to be taken before a son of mine can have any claim upon a crown.”

“That is the first evidence of common sense you have revealed,” said Swain drily. “It is in my mind, Erling, that the first task for you to accomplish is to get both your feet firm-planted on these rushes.”

Erling chuckled with his unfailing good-nature.

“It was for talk such as this that I needed you, Swain,” he replied. “He who plots for high stakes is most in danger of losing because he suffers himself to be distracted from what goes on close at hand around him. With you by me I am certain that I shall not be misled to attempt to vault the stars.”

“Well do men call the *Bifrost** the ‘Trembling Way,’” answered Swain. “It is beautiful to look at after a storm, but I never heard of any adventurer who climbed it to the treasures of the trolls hid at the top. Be careful, Erling, lest you come to regard this path you have outlined for your son and yourself as a *Bifrost* which will melt away the moment the sun shines fair through Norway’s clouds.”

“True talk,” cried Erling. “But we still wander afield. You began by asking me why we might not talk at the common-table. I answered that you were not wed to a Princess. Since I married Kristin I have become a man with a heavy stake in the land. The three Kings all plot to win my allegiance, and the chiefs all spy and strive to discover what I do and plan. It was for this reason that I dared not send to you one of my own men, for had I done so the news would have run from one end of Norway to the other that Erling Skakki had bidden Swain Olaf’s son to voyage hither from the Orkneyar. Instead I took Havard, a young carl in my uncle Solmund’s service, and dispatched him secretly in a Dane ship. Except him and Solmund, only Ingi and I knew his errand.”

Swain cautiously shuffled his feet amongst the floor-rushes.

“I feel the ground shaky beneath me,” he complained. “I am no plotter, but a forthright warrior. What I aim for I fight for, and——”

“No, no,” denied Erling. “You are as agile of wit as any scald. Did I not see how once you twisted the Greek Emperor Manuel, as great a King as there is in the world, to let you fight Olvir Rosta on your own terms, when all his priests and nobles were hostile to you? And men tell many tales, too, of how you have tricked your way to power in the Orkneys. It is not only with the sword that you wrought your fortune!”

* The Rainbow.

Swain made an impatient gesture with his arm as if to push all this talk aside.

"You sent for me," he said. "If I can serve you, I will. But I ask you to remember that I sustained some losses in my Wineland venture last Summer, and if it be possible I desire to make them up."

"You shall," Erling promised eagerly. "Whatever side we take in Norway, there will be profit for us, Swain. The one thing is to plan so that we reap the largest profit possible."

"Humph!" grunted Swain. "That is to be seen. But tell me what is in your mind?"

"This!" Erling paused for a moment, tapping thoughtfully at his lean chin. "Coming hither from the strand we discussed the three Kings. You have a right knowledge of them. Sigurd is warlike, but incautious. Eystein is over-cautious, niggardly, and not given to adopting any course unless the end of it is clear in view. Ingi is brave enough at heart, but twisted in body, and with a cripple's twisted soul. By times he is open, generous, gay, friendly. Again, he turns sour.

"Men look to Sigurd as a warrior, to Eystein as the eldest, to Ingi as the most open-handed. Men dislike Sigurd for his overbearing manner and distrust his impetuosity; they hold back from Eystein because, when all is said and done, he is illegitimate in birth; and they secretly despise Ingi for that he is no warrior—that is, the lenders and the warriors do; the farmers and the townfolks are more friendly to him than either of the other two brothers because of his disposition to govern with a light hand."

"How do they take advice?" demanded Swain.

"Sigurd takes it ill; Eystein when it suits him and does not require expense on his part. Ingi is easily ruled if you are wary."

"Then all things else aside, I am for Ingi," answered Swain promptly. "My experience is that the ruler who will accept advice is the ruler whose rule in the long run is the easiest to get along with. Show me a Jarl in the Orkneys who will not listen to Swain, and I will show you a Jarl who will feel the weight of Swain's hand."

"Ha, so I say, myself," assented Erling. "But the issue is not so simple, Swain. There is much to be said for Ingi—and not the least, from my point of view, is that my father, Kyrpinga Orm, was his governor in his youth. I have been closer to him

than to either of the other Kings all my life, and for that very reason I distrust my own judgment."

Swain shrugged his shoulders.

"Here is much talk, and little progress," he said.

"It is not a subject to be settled off-hand," retorted Erling. "Nor have you heard my reasons for doubting Ingi's chance in the struggle when it comes."

"I am listening."

"To begin with, as I have said, all the chiefs look down upon him because he is no warrior, and even those who serve him now and own allegiance to him might resent fighting for him when he was not able to swing sword in the shield-wall. We Northmen are used to warrior-kings, Swain."

"Yes, and when we are willing to look up to clerks our doom will be sounded," returned Swain. "What you say now makes me less anxious for Ingi."

"I wish to place before you every argument I can find," answered Erling, leaning forward to emphasize his earnestness. "And there is no doubt that the lenders, the boendr and the fighting carls of all ranks secretly or openly despise Ingi, and unless we were able in some way to persuade them to fear and respect him to raise his standard would be only to invite defeat."

"Why raise any King's standard?" yawned Swain. "Sit back, Erling, and let the three destroy one another, until you have a son you can push forward in place of them."

"No man of my position can sit back," replied Erling. "Every lenderman must join in, and it is incumbent upon me to play an important part in the fighting betwixt the royal brothers for the very reason that otherwise I shall not be able to advance my son."

"If you have one," amended Swain.

There was a knock on the door, and Havard thrust his head inside.

"Unna serves the evening meal, lords," he said. "Will you eat it here or in hall?"

"Here," said Erling. And he cast a keen glance at his attendant. "Unna has heady ale, Havard. Are you carls drinking deep?"

"Passably, Erling, passably," admitted Havard with a grin. "Those two scalds are deep-waisted fellows, and the songs they sing——"

"Well, see that you do not over-drink. Bid Unna send meat and drink to us here. Water for Swain, who is no ale-drinker."

Havard made to shut the door, but Erling called him back—

"Is Jon Petr's son in hall?"

"No, he stayed to supper elsewhere, but his fold returned."

"Give them a wide berth. That steward of his had an ill look."

Havard grinned widely at both chiefs.

"Oh, he is of no account, that fellow. Why should we concern ourselves with him?"

The sounds of singing, shouting and boasting in the drinking-hall became audible as Swain and Erling ate the meal which was fetched into them by one of Unna's thralls direct from the kitchens, but they gave no heed to the noise, knowing it to be natural for the house-carls to turn uproarious when they had an opportunity to be entertained by such noted men as Armod and Oddi. Moreover, Erling was a very liberal, easy chief who never stinted his folk, paid them good wages and made no fuss over a few horns of ale more or less. And he and Swain were so absorbed in their conversation, in any case, that they took no interest in what went on without.

They argued the question of Erling's future policy to the end of the candle that flickered between them, and Swain summed up the situation in these words as he peeled off his mail and flung himself down upon the pallet opposite Erling's bed—

"If you can win folk to fight for him, Ingi is the best King for you to push; but I think you must first hit upon a plan for winning the folk to him."

"Ah, that is easily said," Erling answered ruefully. "But we have burned this candle down, and are no nearer to a plan."

"Iceland was not settled in a night," rejoined Swain, and wrapped his cloak around him and rolled over with his face to the wall.

Presently, the two chiefs slept, and through the little window high up in the wall drifted the night-noises of the town, but louder far was the clamor which came from the drinking-hall—now the deep, ringing voices of the scalds in lay or *drapa*, now the rude volume of a chorus, now men's shouts as they boasted or recited achievements, now the thunder of sword-hilts on the oaken tables, beating accompaniment to a tune.

Swain and Erling were so accustomed to such bouts in their own skallis that they slept undisturbed until the door of their chamber banged open and a flood of light shone in their dazzled eyes.



SWAIN started up involuntarily, sword drawn, throwing his cloak around his arm; Erling slid his legs to the floor from the high niche of his couch, and caught a spear as he stood erect.

But it was not enemies who stood on their threshold. Oddi the Little entered, clutching Havard by one arm, and Erling's messenger held in his right hand a billet of fire-wood dabbled with blood on the end.

"What is it?" asked Erling.

"I misdoubt I have slain Brynjulf, Jon Petr's son's steward," gasped Havard.

"How? Slain him? Wherefor?"

"Well, I struck him a shrewd blow on the head, that I know," answered Havard stubbornly.

"What does the carl mean, Oddi?" Swain struck in.

The little scald wrinkled up his brown face into one of the contortions which expressed his mirth.

"Why, he tells the bare truth, Swain, no less," said Oddi. "Armod is outside in the hall this moment doing what he may to bring Brynjulf around and keep Erling's folk and Jon's from springing at each other's throats."

"But how came this?" exclaimed Erling, with rising excitement. "Not for a good deal would I have my people in conflict with one of King Sigurd's following."

Havard scratched his head uneasily and looked down at the bloody stick he held.

"We matched drinks for a while, I remember," he said; "and there was loud talk this way and that way, and the naming of men back and forth."

"And the long and the short of it is," added Oddi, "that we were all drunk with Unna's ale, and having sung and told tales and boasted the better part of the evening we fell to comparing men."

"Ho," said Swain grimly. "Comparing men! I never knew that sport to fail of breeding wo for some wight."

"It is deadly sport," agreed Erling, more uncomfortable than ever. "Was Jon——"

"No, he is not yet returned," replied Oddi. "But you spoke of Sigurd, and you should know that Havard struck Brynjulf for crying that Sigurd should humble Ingi, and that no man who was not nidding would attach himself to a crippled King."

"Publicly in hall?" cried Erling.

The scald nodded, and Havard, crimson with shame, protested—

"But the dog began by sneering at you, Erling, and claiming that his lord was the greatest man of his hands in Norway."

"That was bad enough," rebuked Erling. "This is no time for me and my folk to be calling attention to what we do or think."

"Well, at the worst, I am not of your folk," said Havard sullenly.

"That is true, in a way, yet am I responsible for you personally to Solmund—and for the rest, I doubt if men will haggle strictly on the degree of service you owe me. You have meant well, Havard, but I think the best thing for all of us is that you should flee at once to Solmund. I will send to Jon and learn what man-bote he demands for Brynjulf and patch things up however I can."

"I do not fear Jon or any of his folk," said Havard.

"No, no, of course not, carl! But I do not want to be drawn into a pitched fight in Bergen town to defend you against Jon's vengeance. Be off with you!"

"They would see if he traversed the hall again," put in Oddi. "A dozen of Jon's folk are without, cursing and threatening him."

"Go through the window, then," advised Swain, breaking his silence. "But will you send him alone, Erling?"

The lenderman hesitated, and shook his head.

"No, I will send another man——"

"Why not more?"

"He will not need more. All he requires is speed, and two men can journey swifter to Solmund at Tunsburg than six or a dozen. Go out, Oddi, and summon Hlogi Rafn's son to me. He shall go with Havard."

A babble of voices in denunciation and denial poured through the door as it opened and closed behind the little scald. Erling rapped nervously on the floor with his spear-shaft.

"Too bad, too bad, Havard," he said. "Tell Solmund what happened, also that I will assuage Jon's wrath, if that is possible."

"I am at fault, Erling," Havard answered now with entire humbleness. "The ale stole my wits away. But do not take it too hard. What I say cannot really injure the fortunes of a great noble like you."

Erling looked dubious, but Swain suddenly came to the messenger's assistance.

"There is much sense in what Havard

said," he pronounced. "It is even possible that this business may prove of assistance to us before the arrow has been loosed."

"How?" asked Erling, astonished. "I do not see what good——"

"No man can see over the edge of tomorrow," said Swain; "but sometimes he can arrange to cast the shadow of an event before it."

At that instant the door was reopened, and Oddi returned with Armod and the house-carl Erling had sent for.

This Armod was a very tall man, with long yellow hair and beard, of which he was inordinately vain. He was very slow in his movements, and he spoke with a drawl. But Swain and Erling knew that in a fight he was as cool and certain as he was fearless and capable. It was he who barred the door behind the three this time.

"Well, it is better than might be expected," he said quietly; "Brynjulf is no worse for Havard's blow than a bloody head. But he swears he will have Havard's blood."

Havard leaped for the door.

"He shall have his chance, the foul——"

Swain caught the messenger with one gnarled arm and swung him back to the end wall of the room.

"Not tonight," said Erling. "We will have no more bloodshed."

"Yes," drawled Armod, "for if there is more bloodshed it will be by Unna's spit. She has just driven our disputants off to bed and threatened to parboil the rogue who raises his voice again before morning."

All the men laughed at the picture these words called up. Unna was a mountain of a woman who dwelt for the most part aloof and alone, except for a certain thrall named Kark, in an outhouse in the tavern yard; but when she did show herself, as upon this occasion, she was a force to be reckoned with, berserk in her rage and as violent as a she-bear in pursuit of her cubs.

"If Unna has left Kark, then we may be sure the night will pass in peace," said Swain. "My counsel is that we start these two travelers upon their road, Erling."

And he stooped beneath the high window to make a back for Havard to mount.

"Yes, yes," agreed Erling. "Be off, the two of you. You are lucky that Jon was not here to raise a hue and cry after you, Havard. Go to Solmund, and say to him that I bade him keep you until I come—and

it is my hope that Swain will visit him with me."

"Humph," growled Swain, as Havard climbed to his shoulders and wiggled out the window. "Naught was said to me of visiting Tunsburg."

"And naught has been said to me to show how this blood-letting and comparing of Kings' names outside our door could aid my plans," returned Erling.

"It is not my policy to speak before I am ready," answered Swain. "A man said that he saw a fire burning through the wood, but when he came close it was only the moon. I think I see a spear-glint of reason in this night's business, but let us first make certain it is not a marsh-light burning to tempt us from the safe path."

And no more would he say, then or later. So they helped Hlogi Rafn's son through the window after Havard, and went to sleep again, the two scalds lying in their cloaks on the floor rushes—a bed, as Oddi remarked, both warmer and softer than deck-planks or the leaf-mould of a Wineland forest.

IV



IN THE morning Erling asked Swain when to see Jon and inquire what fine would be sufficient to compensate for Brynjulf's broken head.

"St. Olaf knows it irks me to pay the swine a copper doit," he added. "But I can not afford to start a feud at this time."

"Not unless there is advantage to be gained from it," replied Swain.

"How?" exclaimed Erling, surprised. "Advantage? What advantage? What I require most, as we agreed last night, is to avoid compromising myself until——"

"You find a means to rally a sure following to Ingi," finished Swain. "That I do not dispute."

"And do you advise me to capitalize a brawl between two house-carls for that purpose?" queried Erling.

"Not at all. I say that we should be alert to seize the first opportunity which occurs to forward your purpose."

Erling's jaw dropped.

"My wits must be dulled," he said. "Or you say one thing, and mean another."

"I say only that we need not be too sure that last night's affair is a menace without profit to you."

"Well, then, do you think I should not offer man-bote for Havard's blow?"

Swain considered.

"No, by all means let us discover how Jon stands," he decided. "It may be that big things will flow out of little—as has happened before in Norway."

"We need more than a house-carl's bloody head to win swords for Ingi," returned Erling.

"All fighting starts with a blow," said Swain. "I never heard that it mattered who was struck, so that the shield-walls closed afterward."

"Well, well," said Erling, more puzzled than ever. "If I do not understand your object, Swain, I am sure of your wisdom and good faith. I ask only that you tell me your plan before you finally commit me to it."

"When the plan is shaped you shall have the launching of it," promised Swain.

And he went in search of Jon.

Several of Unna's thralls were busy in the hall, cleaning up the disorder after the night's feasting, and from one of these men he learned that the Sogn chief had returned to the tavern at midnight and might be found in a private chamber similar to Erlings' on the farther side of the building.

Thither Swain fared, kicking aside the fragments of broken furniture, the bones and crusts and litter of soiled rushes which lay all about the tables and bench of the skalli. And when he came to the door the thrall had pointed out he rapped on it with his knuckles.

"Who comes?" boomed Jon's voice.

"Swain Olaf's son," boomed Swain in answer.

"Enter, Swain," responded Jon. "What is your errand with me?"

Jon was sitting on a stool, gnawing a shoulder of lamb and quaffing huge draughts of ale from a silver flagon that stood by him on the floor. His eyes were red and inflamed, and the veins were congested in his face, for he had spent full half the night drinking mead at a friend's house in the town.

"There was trouble in hall here during your absence," answered Swain without preface.

"I know," growled Jon through a mouthful of meat.

His red eyes gleamed sardonically upon the Orkneyman's face.

"One of Erling's following struck your steward," continued Swain calmly. "There

was offense given, but to say truth all concerned had been free with the ale."

"A blow is a blow," snarled Jon, his jaws grinding away. "Blood spilled demands blood."

"Is that your feeling in this matter?" inquired Swain.

"I asked once what your errand was?" countered Jon.

"My errand is to inquire what man-bote you consider it just to assess upon Erling for Havard's blow."

"Let him make me an offer."

Swain regarded him for half a dozen breaths out of unwinking, frosty, blue eyes. Presently Jon averted his own gaze.

"Is this your quarrel?" he muttered.

"Erling is my shield-mate," answered Swain as calmly as he had spoken before. "Make no mistake of that, Jon."

"Well, shield-mate or cup-mate, what should I care?" rasped the Sogn man. "I say a blow has been struck, and blood has been spilled and——"

"I hear," interrupted Swain without raising his voice. "So you said before. Now, will you accept man-bote or leave the quarrel open?"

Jon jerked at the rushes under his feet with the scabbard of his belted sword.

"And I said— 'Let Erling make me an offer,' " he repeated.

"That is not an answer," insisted Swain. "I have come to you, as one chief to another, to inquire your intentions. Do you refuse to answer me?"

Jon flung the piece of meat in his hands onto a platter on the floor.

"I take payment in my own way," he cried. "There were words passed last night which call for a bloody reckoning. The man who assails me in face of my house-carls can not be bought off with silver. Yes, and the King I serve is one whose repute means something to his folk. Sigurd is not one to——"

"You have said enough to show me how you feel," said Swain coldly. "As to the payment you speak of, others discharge honest debts, too. Erling has made you a fair offer, and I believe all men will hold that he has acted honorably. For my part, I would not have crossed the hall to satisfy you."

Jon's beard bristled with rage, but he made a determined effort to master his temper.

"You are not Erling, Swain," he answered.

"You do not serve a King who is so weak that all men laugh at him, who is a jest among warriors."

"I am Erling's friend," rejoined Swain. "And I counsel you to bear in mind that I am widely known as one who renders full payment for all debts and offenses."

And he turned and left the room before Jon could make reply.

Erling listened to his report with gloomy foreboding.

"Yes, it is as I feared," said the lenderman. "Havard has betrayed me into a position where I shall be compeled to cast myself into a feud which will rouse all of Sigurd's friends against me and align me past recall as Ingi's man."

"Bah!" snorted Swain. "Why be cast down? Havard is out of harm's way. Jon has not struck a blow. You are already known as the son of your father who governed Ingi's infancy. And besides, I begin to see that spear-glint of reason twinkling larger in the mirk of tomorrow—if Jon is as much of a hot-headed fool as I deem him to be."

"What? What?" protested Erling. "Is your plan formed, Swain?"

"Not yet. But how if we waited upon Ingi now?"

"If you are ready. But——"

"Let us go to him. I never thought to ask any man to lead me before a King, but it is rightly said that 'he who travels from his own hearth must sample many foreign dishes.' "

V

 THE scarlet-cloaked guards at the entrance to King Ingi's skalli readily gave admittance to Swain and Erling, and within doors one of the King's chamberlains conducted them to the room in which the King was sitting with several of his courtmen in attendance. These latter folk he dismissed as the lenderman and his friend appeared, signing the chamberlain to fetch chairs for them to the window, where he sat looking out upon the shipping in the fjord and the busy life of the wharves.

King Ingi was small in stature, as has been said, and he was deformed by a hump on his back and a chest out of proportion to his bulk which made him seem to have a second hump in front; one of his feet, too, was shorter than the other and misshapen, so that it dragged when he

walked. But his features were not unhandsome, albeit pinched and colorless, and he had yellow hair as silken as Armod's. Perhaps that which marred him the most was not his deformities, but the look of petulant discontent which dwelt usually on his face.

He waved Swain and Erling to the chairs the chamberlain set for them, and fixed his eyes upon the Orkneyman.

"You may go, Kalli," he said to the chamberlain. "Well, Swain, it is two years since we met, and in those two years, men say, you have traveled far and wrought great deeds on two sides of the world."

"For what I did, you must talk with the scalds if you would know more," answered Swain shortly. "It is not my custom to discuss what I have done."

Ingi's eyes narrowed, then he laughed as curtly as Swain had spoken.

"Yes, that is your reputation," he acknowledged. "And since you are as frank as usual in your speech I will match you with equal frankness. I am not much concerned for what you have done in the past, save as it indicates your ability to outfight or outwit others. My interest is to engage you to work in my behalf here in Norway."

Erling started to open his mouth, as if to soften this downright speech; but Swain laughed.

"Frankness is the father of frankness, King. It is fair that I should repay you in your own coin. So I say that if you will show me it is to my interest to work in your interest—and also in Erling's interest—I will think upon your request."

The King's thin cheeks glowed pink, and Erling interposed hastily—

"It is Swain's way——"

"I know something of Swain's way," said the King. "Although I question whether he would so address a King who had no hump to his back and could walk straight on his feet."

"Straight or crooked, I have little use for Kings or Jarls," replied Swain. "My chief concern is for myself and for those I count my friends. You have never done aught for me, Lord King. Why should I do aught for you—save it advances me in wealth or honor?"

Ingi regarded him now with a kind of impartial curiosity.

"I believe you mean what you say," the King remarked softly.

"My head on it," Swain retorted.

"It is at least amusing to discover a man

who speaks honestly," Ingi resumed. "It is more than I might expect from Erling here, who, I suppose, has been discussing with you overnight whether or not he should dare to merge his fortunes with mine."

Erling was on the point of denying this thrust with indignation, but Swain took the words out of his mouth.

"Something of this sort we have debated," he said. "Why not? Erling has his future to make or to ruin. It is as much to him as yours is to you."

"But he would not say so," jeered Ingi.

"I will say this much," put in Erling desperately. "When I choose my side I adhere to it, and do not jump from one camp to the other and back again, as some men will if they have the chance."

"No, you are too intelligent," answered the King, still with a touch of railery.

He turned to Swain again.

"I have no chief in my following like you, Swain," he observed. "But the last time I spoke with Jarl Rognvald he told me that there was no other man like you in the North, and I begin to think that he was right—as, also, that it is a lucky thing for all Kings and Jarls that that is so."

Swain shrugged his broad shoulders with a carelessness that was baffling in its utter impersonality.

"I am what I am," he said. "You sought me, King, I did not seek you. What will you have?"

Ingi motioned to flagons and horns on a side-table, but Swain shook his head impatiently.

"I am no ale-swigger, Lord King. What will you have of me?"

"Has Erling said nothing of my purpose?"

"Erling has said much, but that was the talk of his brain, not yours. I can not judge your case from his words."

The King nodded assent to this.

"Words are of little use aside from men, eh, Swain? Well, my case is easily stated. I am a King who is likely soon to be without a kingdom—or a head. I would avert it. I care not how. On the one hand, you see, I am used to my kingship, seeing I have practised it since I was a babe and carried into battle in a warrior's belt. And on the other hand, my head is the one part of my body which is not twisted or misshapen; I can not well do without it."

"And what makes you think that I can be of service to you?" asked Swain.

King Ingi propped his chin on one hand, and stared out the window at the shipping in the haven.

"First," he said, "I remember how you came before me two years ago. I had more friends, then, than I have now, Swain. Do you, too, remember? I did not receive you in an inner room, but on the dais in my drinking-hall, and there were lendermen and great warriors and wealthy boendr and merchants all around me, and whether they meant it or not they did me honor——"

"Of what use was their honoring you, if they did not mean it?" snapped Swain.

The King reflected again.

"Yes, you reason justly," he admitted. "As it has turned out, of what use was their honoring me, when now, of them all I can not count surely upon one—no, not even Erling here, whose father took the place of father to me after the Irish slew my father? Well, be that as it may, what I remember chiefly from that first time you came before me is that you refused to bend your will to mine. Yes, and when I objected to your taking Erling with you to Mikligard, and the two scalds, Armod and Oddi—you say they are with you now?"

Swain nodded.

"Good! I shall hear from them how you have occupied yourself, if your own lips are sealed. And a crippled King has little to do beyond listening to what other men have to say of still other men's adventures. But this does not interest you, Swain, who live your own adventures. Well, well! As I was saying, I objected that you should take from me three friends as valuable as Erling and Armod and Oddi, and you laughed at me. You laughed at me in the midst of my house-carls and courtmen!

"I remembered that, Swain. And afterward, Jarl Rognvald visited me when he was in Norway, and he gave me further tidings of you. He said that you were the most powerful man in the Orkneyar, that he could not hold his Jarldom if you were his enemy, nor could any other man. And not long since Erling had word of a voyage you made beyond Greenland to this land men call 'Wineland the Good,' and there was a tale that you and your following had a battle with the red folk and made the greatest slaughter that was ever known in a fight by so few men.

"I have heard much, too, of your feud

with Olvir Rosta, and what I heard led me to respect you, for a man who will pursue his enemy so relentlessly must have a brave heart. I know Olvir is no mean foe.

"And lastly, Swain, I believe you to be one who is not fearful of a fight against odds—and the Saints know that my cause is close to hopeless, whoever supports me!

"These are my reasons for thinking that you can be of service to me. There is no other man in the North to whom I would say as much. I have said more to you already than I ever said to Erling, as he will attest if you ask him."

"I do not want his attestation," retorted Swain gruffly. "Erling is my friend, and I would risk my head for him, but not to help him push you forward, unless there was a safe stake in view. Give me facts, Lord King, facts! As—why have you fewer friends today than two years ago?"

Ingi blinked at the abruptness of the question.

"Why—why—Sigurd and Eystein—they—their folk—they—" and the words came with a rush—"what can I do, if they mock at me or steal from the merchants who support me or loot the farm of the boendr who come to my Things? I am helpless! My power stretches no farther than the spear-points of my house-carls. Men say: 'He is an easy King, Ingi, but what can you expect from a King with a hump on his back?' And warriors are ashamed to stand in their manhood in front of a cripple and own him master! May the blight of Fafnir smite them in their strength! I——"

"They have never seen you in the forefront of battle, swinging your blade and bidding the house-carls dress their shields," said Swain.

The King's eyes glittered fiercely.

"Take care, Swain," he shrilled. "I will support much, but not mockery to my face."

"I but said what all men say, if your own tale be true," returned Swain, undisturbed.

"What I say, and what you say— But enough! It is not for me to say to you or any other man, Swain, that I fear steel no more than you. Yet it is sober truth. Weak I may be. A coward I am not."

"Then why do folk say——"

"Why do the winds blow?" demanded Ingi impetuously. "Sigurd and Eystein put about all manner of stories against me. Folk look at me as I pass in the street, and

that is enough to convince them. 'He is crooked, he is crippled,' they say. 'Therefore he is nidding.' "

His fingers worked convulsively.

"Ah, if I had a fair wedge of sturdy carls, and Sigurd or Eystein in front of us on a level field!"

"Why not?" asked Swain.

"How many men do you think I could muster?" replied the King. "Men who would fight? I do not know. I fear to guess."

"Humph," grunted Swain. "There is a beginning in all things, King."

Ingi peered at him now with a hint of venomous ferocity.

"Is this the advice you have to give me, Swain?" he inquired.

"I can help no man who cannot help himself—or will not," said Swain. "What is to be said of a King whose name is openly flouted in his own town? Of a King whose supporter must flee from his own town to escape death? Of a King whose enemies refuse to accept man-bote for a blow struck in defense of the King's fame?"

Ingi's face twitched with passion; his voice sank to a whisper.

"This passes all!" he murmured. "Speak quickly, Orkneyman! Is there reason in what you say—or—or—" his fingers plucked at his sword-hilt—"or do you find diversion in taunting me, as I bade you not to. Yes, yes, Swain, I bade you not to! I warned you! Because I summoned you does not mean——"

Swain sat on without moving a muscle, but Erling was stirred to action.

"He speaks the bitter truth, Lord King. It happened no longer ago than last night."

The King's face was dreadful to see.

"Whoever he is," he snarled, "lead me to this man who flouted me. He shall suffer tortures—I tell you those which Sigurd Slembidiakn suffered were merciful by comparison!"

But Swain lifted a restraining hand.

"Wherefore?" he demanded.

"Because I will have my vengeance. Because I will slay——"

"Ah, but first you spoke of winning sure title to your crown. A man does not succeed against enemies of greater strength by plunging blindly at vengeance. If you slay a lenderman in Bergen streets what will the folk say? Why, that Ingi overbore him by treachery or force of numbers, and

did him foully to death. No, no, King, that is not the path to suit your turn!"

Ingi was impressed.

"You blow hot and cold," he fumed, almost in Erling's words the night before. "I cannot make you out. But show me this path which will 'suit my turn.' "

"I do not know that I can," answered Swain coolly. "Much depends upon you—and upon chance."

The door of the King's chamber crashed open, and Oddi ran in, waving aside the agitated chamberlain.

"God save you, Lord King!" cried the little scald. "Loath I am to burst in upon you in this fashion, and with news of the saddest, withal."

"What news?" asked the King, startled.

"It is sad for Erling, not you. Havard and Hlogi Rafn's son are slain by Jon Petr's son's folk."

Erling started up from his chair, but Swain remained seated. He had not moved since the scald interrupted them, keeping his eyes fixed upon a *snekke* that was pulling up the fjord beyond the town.

"How came this, Oddi?" demanded Erling. "Are you certain?"

"Alas, there can be no mistake," replied Oddi. "Brynjulf and ten others of Jon's house-carls came to Unna's a few moments since, laughing and boasting of their deed. It seems that they went after Havard as soon as Brynjulf had had his wound dressed; they had gone to the house where Jon was drinking and he bade them go. He told them that Havard would surely flee to Solmund at Tunsburg, and they followed that road. They came upon Havard and Hlogi just past the dawn, asleep by the way, and slew them before they had a chance to draw their weapons."

"A foul deed!" exclaimed Erling. "Well, be it wise or unwise, I will fall upon Jon with every man I can muster, and——"

"Too late," said Swain, and pointed out the window toward the distant *snekke*.

"Yes, it must be he," agreed Oddi. "For he and his folk left Unna's before any of Erling's could come at them. He called to Armod by the gate to tell you, Swain, that he had paid himself his man-bote."

"Is this he you spoke of?" asked Ingi of Swain. "Was it Jon who——"

"It was Jon's man Brynjulf, whom Havard struck down because he said that Sigurd should humble Ingi and that no man who

was not nidding would attach himself to a crippled King."

Ingi cried out like a man in pain, and again his face was contorted by a gust of passion.

"I think this news is sadder for me than for Erling, in all truth," he said. "For if he has lost two followers, I have lost my honor. Who will respect a King whose name cannot protect his supporters in his own town?"

"Who?" echoed Swain sardonically.

"This is a bad business," said Erling heavily. "But whatever it betides I will not allow Jon to put such a disgrace upon me without attempting to punish him for it. I will summon every man I——"

"It is not for you, but for the King to revenge this slight, since, after all, it reflects more upon him than upon you," interrupted Swain.

The King laughed savagely.

"You are a rare jester, Swain," he said, "but I am beyond objecting to any man's slights."

"Perhaps you are in error there," answered Swain. "Has it occurred to you that the first fruit of Jon's deed was to impel Erling to array himself in your support?"

Erling looked uncomfortable, and Ingi laughed again.

"He will find a way to work loose of me. How say you, Erling?"

"It is a bad business, however you look at it," Erling repeated. "Jon is a close friend to King Sigurd, and Sigurd will take all any harm I wreak on Jon or his folk."

"It may well be the death of you," assented Ingi with sarcastic amiability.

"True," said Swain. "And yet it might be turned to the advantage of all of us."

There was that in his voice which drew all eyes toward him, silently questioning.

"Look you, Lord King," he continued. "You and Erling have asked me for counsel, saying frankly that your plight as King is a desperate one. Yet the most desperate plight can be remedied by skill and good fortune. If I show you a way to power will you promise a fit reward to Erling and me?"

"You shall not want whatever I can give you!" Ingi's voice was tense. "Gold, your enemies' heads, land, ships——"

Swain looked to Erling.

"Is this King's word good?"

"He has never broken it," replied Erling promptly. "But what——"

"I will show you," Swain cut him off. "As I have said to Erling, King Ingi's difficulty is that the fighting carls hold him in contempt. To gain strength to hold his crown he must convince them that he is a warrior, for all his crippling."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Ingi eagerly.

Swain pointed again out the window at the *snekke* that was just on the point of vanishing around a purple headland.

"There goes Ingi's luck," he said. "It was one thing to exact vengeance upon Jon in Bergen town, to hew him down with the King's house-carls. It is another thing to pursue him to his own lands, and take your vengeance from him there."

"It was my intention to pursue Jon, in any event, Swain," said Erling doubtfully; "but I do not see how that will make for the King's credit."

"It will make for the King's credit," replied Swain, "because if you will be guided by me the King, himself, shall pursue Jon—not as a King, with a troop of scarlet-coated house-carls, but as a private warrior, who seeks vengeance for an ill-deed committed against a friend who ventured to speak for him."

Ingi's fingers went white as they clutched firm hold of his sword-hilt. There was no hint of irresolution in the vigor of their grasp now.

"Ha, by St. Olaf, there is truth in your words, Swain!" he gasped. "I see your intent. You would have it said throughout Norway that Ingi was not a man who would suffer shame."

"I would have men say that albeit a cripple you were likewise a warrior."

"But this might be the death of the King," protested Erling. "You propose that he go with a few into Sogn, where Sigurd's folk are numerous and well-armed."

"I propose that he go with you and myself, the two scalds and perhaps five-score others," answered Swain. "I will furnish the men. If he meets death, no less are the rest of us like to perish, but I do not think our end would be dishonorable."

Ingi hurpled to his feet, leaning upon his scabbarded sword as upon a cane.

"True talk, Swain," he said. "And I am one for whom death has no fears. The Saints know life has given me little save pain and despite. If I can make a good end I shall be content."

"I am no forelooker," returned Swain;

"but I do not think you or any of us will come to an early end. This venture is the spear-glint of reason I saw in last night's mirk, Erling. Had Jon been agreeable and moderate we might have lacked so excellent an opportunity."

"In that case, you would have found another," said Oddi, chuckling.

"Perhaps," agreed Swain. "This King here is a man of spirit, whatever else may be said of him, and it is usually possible to advance such a man by the right means."

"Yet first you must have the right means, and the wit to perceive it," said Ingi.

VI



ERLING was still dazed by the unexpectedness of Swain's proposal.

"It may be advisable to do as you say," he declared doggedly; "but I have not heard you outline a plan. Now, what you would have us do amounts to war. Sigurd rules in Sogn, and if we are to invade his lands let us at least raise every spear we can hire."

"That is where you are wrong, Erling," rejoined Swain. "I am proposing to manage this affair simply as a raid by one man upon another man who has offended him. It is not to be a war between Kings."

"But Jon is Sigurd's friend and cupmate. Sigurd will——"

"Before Sigurd has word of us we shall be safe in Bergen, and before he can raise an army or a fleet to come at us we shall have spread our tale all through Norway from Stavenger to Throndhjem."

"A tale! What is a tale against steel blades? You speak like a scald, Swain——"

"Yes, that will be for the scalds to take care of," assented Swain equably. "I have not overlooked Armod and Oddi in my plan. It shall be for them to journey from town to town and from skalli to skalli, singing Ingi's fame. In a few weeks men will talk of him in the same breath with Harald Haardrada."

"But a tale, Swain!" pleaded Erling. "A tale is—is—words!"

"And words win men's hearts and swords. We are going to win Norway to us, not by a battle which would mean the slaying of thousands, but by one deed of daring which will rouse all men's admiration and set them to debating Ingi's merits when they gather around the skalli fires or stay their hands in the farmyards."

Erling tossed up his hands in a hopeless gesture.

"This business is of my making," he said. "I am responsible. So I must take what comes. But I say to you all that I see little good for any of us. It would be better far, Lord King, if you bided safe in Bergen and Swain fared on his viking-cruise, while I make shift to slay one or two of Jon's folk."

"He who toys with destiny must not draw back," exclaimed King Ingi scornfully.

"No, no," denied Swain. "It is you who have said that you are responsible for what has occurred, Erling. What? After you fetched me hither from the Orkneys and stirred me with your dreams of power, shall you leap out of the boat and bid us find another helmsman?"

"It is you who are helmsman," growled Erling.

"It is not my intention that Norway shall believe that," answered Swain. "This is your enterprize, and the credit for it shall go to you."

But Erling offered ardent objection to this assertion.

"It is as unthinkable that I should accept credit for another man's plan as that I should claim slayings I did not do. No, Swain, I will serve you loyally, if I must, but——"

"An end to talk!" rasped Swain. "We have deeds to do. Afterward will be time for setting off one performance against another, and arguing who shall have merit for each."

"Leave that to the scalds," advised Oddi, quirking up his brown face in a myriad wrinkles. "Armod and I will see credit given fairly and to all. Oh, I foresee rare deeds and essays of arms in this venture!"

"There will be credit and merit for all," interposed King Ingi. "But we have yet to hear your plan, Swain."

"It is this." Swain jerked out his words in short, quick sentences. "We leave Bergen after dark tonight. We march overland, circling wide into the Uplands, hiding by day. We drop down upon Jon's lands like hill-wolves by night and without warning. We return as we went. You can ride a horse, King?"

Ingi nodded.

"And shall I take none of my own house-carls?" he asked.

"You go as a private Norseman on this venture," answered Swain. "If you had royal guards with you, then Sigurd might

justly say that you had invaded his lands as a rival King."

"He will say it anyway," snapped Erling.

"Let him! Men will laugh at him. I tell you, Erling, if we achieve this deed as I intend it will flare through Norway like a bright flame, and the folk will talk of naught else."

"Do you say that Ingi will have won the land by the one deed?" cried Erling skeptically.

"No, the winning will be still to do. But I do say that when the fight comes he will not be at a disadvantage. For he will have men's respect."

"We shall require guides for the land journey," said the King.

"I can find them in my following," offered Erling. "It is the one service Swain suffers me to render."

Swain laughed, and clapped the lenderman on his shoulder.

"Heart up, carl!" he said. "What? I show you the path to make your King safe, and you snarl like a dog pulled from a deer's flank."

"You show me the path to a sure doom," retorted Erling.

Nor would he say more until after they had left the King's skalli, Swain having engaged with Ingi to come aboard *Death-bringer* secretly that evening, so that their company might be rowed up the fjord and set ashore at a certain royal farm, safe from prying eyes in the town, whence they might secure horses and provisions for the march over the mountains and through the forests of the Uplands to Sogn.

"Come," said Swain then. "You have vented enough despite upon me, Erling. Is this the way to reward me for attempting what last night you were persuading me to do?"

"But to plunge blindfold into destruction!" groaned Erling. "Oh, it is well enough for you, Swain. If you are not slain you can retire to the Orkneys and be safe within reason. But for me defeat means exile or death, and I think death would be preferable."

"Why are you so sure we shall be defeated?"

"How can it be otherwise? Five-score men, you said? And a handful of mine, Ingi, the two scalds and ourselves. Why, Jon's neighbors could make collops of us!"

"If they had the time," agreed Swain.

"But they will not. You prosperous Norse lendermen have lost your viking instincts. You do not realize the possibilities of a swift foray, a blow in the dark, a burning, a slaying, and then retreat. In the west, now, it is a common occurrence."

"But this is not the west, Swain!"

"Well, consider it in this way," urged Swain. "Am I one to put my neck under the ax without reason?"

"No."

"Have you ever known me to be rash when I did not see every prospect of victory?"

"No."

"I am as confident of victory as I have ever been. We will pay Jon in his own coin, and afterwards—ah, that will be worth watching!"

Erling wagged his head sorrowfully.

"Truly, I speak as one nidding and fearful," he mourned. "Before I married Kristin——"

"Ho," laughed Swain. "The fox is out of the sack. A wedded man is a fettered man. What said I before?"

"Ah, it is easy for you to jeer! I cannot shut a princess in a nunnery, and if I am lost, my son——"

"Who is yet to be born. Be reasonable, man! One step at a time. Make Ingi powerful. Afterward——"

"You speak always of 'afterward,'" growled Erling. "Afterward I begin to look for Sigurd's ax on the small of my neck."

"Afterward I will stand by you," said Swain. "That is a promise."

He halted outside the front of Unna's tavern, and surveyed the bustling traffic of the street, breathed deep of the keen air.

"We Orkneymen are Norsemen, too," he continued thoughtfully. "And I am of a mind to try if I can do in Norway what I wrought in the Islands. For hundreds of men say thousands. I see no other difference. Also, the Islands grow tame. The two Jarls no longer fight with me. The other chiefs bow to me. I must fare afield, pursue Olvir, if I would find adventure. And why should I fare farther than Norway? Here are three Kings to be set one against the other. Here is Olvir in a hostile camp. Here are you, Erling, to be made great and a King's father. Could I ask more? I say no!"

"But all this has no concern with the

slaying of Jon and the salvation of Ingi," pointed out Oddi the Little, at his elbow.

"Not so. It has every concern, for all great matters must have a beginning. Oddi, get you to *Deathbringer*, and acquaint Kolbiorn with our plans. Come, Erling, fetch me that man of yours who knows the Sogn side. We must chart our journey. And you had best send others of your folk to circulate the town and determine if Jon left spies behind him. Heart up, carl! He who aims high must risk all."

"But you are not wed to a princess," protested Erling. "Yes, yes, I brought it upon myself. Oh, why did I ever send for you? I should have known what a wolf-baiter you are. To make a King by word-magic! None but you would think of such a thing, Swain."

"You will find it more powerful than any Thing that ever met on Bergen holm," retorted Swain. "Forget your princess, and recall the odds we faced together in the past. The lower Ingi is today, the stronger will be our hold upon him—and I know from experience that you cannot have too strong a hold upon a Jarl, who, after all, is only a small King. They are an ungrateful breed, these rulers, but the mightiest will bob and prance if you manage right."

VII



THAT was a dark night and a moonless, and none of the Bergenfolk saw *Deathbringer* slip from her anchorage and crawl silently up the fjord to King Ingi's farm on the northern bank. There Swain landed, and with him the King, the chamberlain Kalli and one of Ingi's thralls, Erling and a dozen of the lenderman's house-carls, the two scalds and five-score of *Deathbringer's* company. Kolbiorn and a score of men were left to sail the dragon back to her anchorage and guard her against Swain's return.

From the King's farm they procured half a dozen horses and a quantity of provisions, and long before sunrise they were away in the Uplands, threading a pine forest where dwelt only men who were outside the law and a few wood-cutters and herders, wild folk and eager to be left alone. When dawn came the raiders hid themselves in a wood, but late in the afternoon they resumed their eastward journey, climbing always higher and higher.

Here were no roads or tracks, except

those the wild beasts had trodden, and after a short rest the next morning they were able to continue on their way by daylight, trending northwards so that they might circle the inhabited lands which lay beneath the Uplands and the savage interior forests and work down upon the head waters of the Sogn Fjord.

Such men as they met fled promptly at first sight of the files of Swain's bearded house-carls; any who tarried was brought before Swain, and bidden to take his choice between the sword and an oath on the bones of the blessed Olaf to breath no word of what he had seen. There was scant need to threaten. Swain's terrible blue eyes were threat enough, without words.

Of their journey little is to be said, and their rest-quarters were no more than clearings in the wilderness. If it rained they built shelters of branches or roofed over holes in the rocks. At the head of the column Swain tramped beside King Ingi, with the two scalds close at hand; Erling marched in the rear to keep the men in line and take the command if they were attacked from behind by the outlaws that infested the Uplands.

When they halted they ate whatever food they happened to have in their pouches, or if they were lucky they killed a reindeer. They halted only to take such rest as they must have, and to stay their hunger. So soon as they were able to put their feet to the ground again Swain hauled them from their cloaks and ordered the carl of Erling's who was their guide, to pick his path and be speedy at it.

Adventures they had none, but great good came from the confidence which Swain gradually impressed upon Ingi and Erling. For at the first the King addressed himself to the enterprise willingly enough, yes, eagerly, but it was with the cynical desperation of a man who felt that he had little left to live for, and welcomed any issue, so it came to him honorably. Two nights in the open with Swain's gruff Orkneymen, fighters and viking-farers of tried renown, who had sampled every sea and land their keels could reach, put him in better case.

The calm self-reliance of these wanderers, their giant stature, their instinctive discipline and trust in their chief came to inspire him with an optimism as clear-headed as Swain's own. The occasional

moments of relaxation around the fire or in silent glades of the woods, when the scalds sang lays of Swain's prowess or recited sagas of the deeds he and these very men had wrought, brewed a heady courage in all who listened that nerved every arm with a steely determination which took no account of odds.

The best qualities in Ingi's character were brought out by these conditions. Not content with being at the head of the column, he would never eat or drink until assured there was sufficient for all. He was ever the first to respond to Swain's order to resume the march. And although horse-back riding was hard on his twisted body and the fatigue of his exertions grooved deep lines of pain in his pallid face, he was never loath to continue as long as was deemed necessary.

Erling, too, became more hopeful as day by day passed without their march being discovered or mishap hindering them. It was as if the farther he drew from his princess and the court intrigues which had haunted the King's skalli, the more fearless became his attitude. Presently, he began to admit that they might succeed. From that it was but a step to accepting the keen hunger for action which Ingi voiced at every opportunity.

And when the day came the guide warned them they were within striking distance of Jon's stead, and might set about the preparation of their blow, it was Ingi and Erling who were all for pressing on by daylight without the loss of a moment, and Swain who insisted that to be sure of catching Jon, and destroying his establishment before his neighbors could rally to him, they should bide until the fall of darkness. In the end Swain had his way. They rested under cover of the forest, laying by the heels a swineherd who had brought up his charges to feast in a beech-grove of the Uplands and whose escape would have disclosed their presence.

This fellow was sullen and would say little even under torture, except that:

"Jon was ready for whatever betided, and they should have hard knocks and little comfort for their pains, God curse them!"

Which saying he reiterated again and again, choking down the pain they inflicted upon him, until at last Swain bade the torturers desist, for, said he—

"This is a brave carl, and I would not do him greater hurt than I must."

"I did not ask mercy of you!" spat the swineherd.

"And to that I will bear oath to Jon before I dispatch him," assented Swain.

"You are more like to lose your own head," snarled the swineherd. "For Jon has reckoned on Erling's coming at him."

Swain nodded placidly.

"But not with such strength, carl, eh?"

And at this the swineherd hung his head and muttered to himself, hissing like an angered swan.

"If Jon is ready perhaps we had best attack swiftly, lest by some chance others come to aid him," said Erling doubtfully.

But Swain shook his head.

"The swineherd sought to baffle us through fear. Jon will have outguards posted, and we shall not take him in his bed; but he looks for Erling to assail him with a score or two at most. He will have no means to withstand our numbers, as you shall see."

"Yet it may be he has arranged to summon aid by the horn," suggested King Ingi. "Not that I would draw back, Swain, or even delay if——"

"Let him summon," said Swain. "My Orkneyfolk are accustomed to slay faster than those they oppose. And flame will burn any man's skalli. Jon shall not elude us."

VIII



JON'S stead was a considerable group of buildings on the bank of one of the upper inlets of the Sogn Fjord, and it was surrounded by wide fields and clearings where the cattle were pastured. A boy who was watching in one of these fields first saw the twinkle of starlight on the helms of Swain's folk, and shrilled the alarm. Other men, house-carls and thralls, who had been on watch elsewhere, joined with him, and the hoarse grunting of their *ludr*-horns bellowed across the quiet countryside. It was like the clamor of the sea-cats on the Halogaland beaches in the pupping-time.

But Swain made little account of these outguards; his long shield-wall swept them helter-skelter before him, and with Ingi galloping in front of the array, the raiders stormed into the stead yard as Jon and his men tumbled from their bunks, buckling

their mail, snatching at the first weapons that came handy.

"Fire! Bring fire!" the cry went up as Swain's folk penetrated the outer ring of buildings, graineries, stables, thralls' quarters.

But Swain roared in answer:

"No fire, carls! Let no man use torch until I give the word. Would you aid Jon to summon help?"

Jon burst from his skalli door eager to carry the fight to the attackers, for he supposed, as Swain had predicted, that this was an onfall by Erling with a score or two of followers.

"Dress shields, Sognfolk!" he shouted. "Together! Together! Here is Jon! To me, Sognfolk! Erling cannot——"

And then the pale moon revealed to him Ingi's bent figure spurring toward him and the full extent of the mailed ranks that were pouring through the gaps between the buildings around the yard.

"Erling is not alone here, Jon," cried Ingi, bending to hew off the head of a Sognman who was attempting to flee to his master's protection.

"Nor does the King slay alone," called Erling, as he cast his spear and transfixed the man next to the chief. "That is for Havard—a beginning of vengeance."

"Yes, yes," quoth Swain from his place next the King. "There was some talk betwixt us of payment, Jon."

"He wins who collects the last debt," answered Jon, and he, too, cast his spear.

If Erling had not reached up his shield it would have smitten King Ingi in the left shoulder.

And now Jon understood the odds against him, and he strove desperately to win clear of the trap. His great voice echoed above the constant din of the weapons and the bellowing of the *ludr*-horns which the women and boys of his household were blowing for dear life.

"Back, Sognfolk," he cried. "To the skalli. Under cover, Jon's men!"

But this move Swain was prepared to counter; he had expected it, and he swung his left wing around until it was interposed between Jon and the skalli. Then Swain thrust forward with determination, his shield-wall hemming Jon in like a broad-mouthed V. Slowly, a few feet at a time, leaving a trail of blood behind him, Jon and his folk retreated toward the bank of

the fjord. Almost before they knew it Swain had them surrounded, mailed enemies on three sides, the water at their backs.

Swain and his folk were spent and weary, what with the running and fighting, and he called a halt to permit them to catch their breath. Nor were Jon and the Sognfolk loath to profit by the opportunity either. The two groups leaned upon their weapons and stared at each other in the moonlight, and the only sounds for an instant were the wailing and crying of women, the choking groans of the wounded, the lapping of the water, the dull, grunting bellow of the *ludr*-horns—which began to be answered from neighboring steads along the fjord.

"Little profit shall you have of this, King, you or any of your people!" snarled Jon.

"Not so, Jon," he laughed. "It may be, indeed, that we shall yet suffer sore scathe or even lose life itself. But no man shall be able to say that Ingi, son of Harald Gilli-christ, allowed his enemies to mock him for a cripple. For it is in my mind, Jon, that while I *may* die, you are *sure* to die."

Jon cursed him for answer, and Erling said—

"Come, let us fall on, and make an end."

But Swain called out:

"Hold, carls! Jon, will you take life at King Ingi's hands, and swear to be his man and pay him such fine as he assesses upon you?"

"Sooner would I die under torment!" howled Jon. "Forward, Sognfolk! These curs fear us."

And he led his men at Swain's shield-wall in a solid group, thinking to smash a path through; but Swain drew in his wings, as he was well able to do, seeing that he had not lost above ten of his following, whereas of the two-score and five who had rallied to Jon close to a score were slain or hurt, and repelled the rush with ease.

Jon's men were split asunder by the force of their own charge and the vigor with which they were assailed in return, and the fight, which had been ordered, now broke up into a series of combats between single men and groups. The largest following of the Sognmen clung to Jon, and Swain, himself, attacked these, slashing his way forward until he came in front of Jon.

"Ho, Orkneyman," Jon welcomed him. "I have heard you consider yourself the most famous warrior in the North, but

we shall let a little light into that legend."

"I am willing," replied Swain.

He and Jon both fought with swords, Swain with his great blade Hausakliufr—Skull-splitter—and men say it was a fight worth the watching. Jon fought with passion and heat; Swain was cold as an iceberg. Jon leaped and ran and bent and swayed; Swain held steady as a rock. And it came about that after a while the other men who were fighting lowered their weapons and stood aside in two groups to watch the issue of the chiefs' struggle.

By the fjord-bank were the remnants of Jon's following, blood-stained and weary. A few paces up the shore Ingi sat his horse, dripping sword in hand, his haggard features bathed in the glare of the rising moon. Erling stood forward of the raiders, very discontented and wroth that Swain should be matched with Jon, instead of himself. Once he called out to the pair, as Jon sprang clear and circled warily in search for an opening.

"Let me at him, Swain. It was my men he slew."

"But it was I he told of the payments he makes," answered Swain, his eyes never leaving the Sognman's face, "and I intend to show him how Swain makes payment."

"Slay him, and be done with it," hissed Ingi.

"He cannot," Jon shouted, leaping in to close quarters again.

"Will not," retorted Swain, never panting, as Hausakliufr rose and fell, parried and slashed, hewed and recovered. "I plan another punishment for you, Jon."

And as he spoke he stooped under up-raised shield and swung the mighty blade from right to left. Jon, caught off balance with one foot in air, tried to hop above the blow; but he was too late. The watchers heard the thud of steel biting flesh, a clear, chipping grind—and Jon tumbled backwards, his left foot hewed off at the ankle, his maimed leg spouting a ruddy stream.

But he was scarce on his back when Swain dropped sword and shield, and knelt beside him, unfastening his belt, calling to Erling behind them.

"Send to the skalli. Quick! A score of carls. Find pitch, oil, clean cloths. A fire here, some of you others."

And as the little group of Jon's men by the fjord-bank swayed uncertainly, he added:

"Down arms, Jon's folk! No man of you shall be harmed—and if the gods are kind I shall yet save your master."

He was fastening Jon's belt around the stump the while he was talking, and the Sognmen obeyed. Indeed, the fight was clean gone out of them. But not so felt the King and Erling.

"Why save this snake, Swain?" exclaimed Ingi.

"Let him die," growled Erling. "He has well merited it."

Swain did not answer them until Jon's belt was pulled tight enough to staunch the flow of blood. Then he wiped his hands on the grass, and stood up.

"Dead, Jon is only an enemy we have done to death. His friends will say he suffered a King's wrath bravely. Alive, I think we may make him a powerful ally."

"He an ally?" protested Erling. "Are you mad? Remember that every moment we delay here brings his friends so much nearer to us."

"I do remember," answered Swain calmly. "I am of a mind to make their pursuit useless."

Ingi gave the Orkneyman a sharp look.

"Well I know you must have a hidden purpose in view, Swain," said the King. "But why not admit us to your confidence?"

"Bide until we have made sure of Jon, King," rejoined Swain. "Without that my plan is of no avail."

So they stood around, shifting their feet uneasily—Ingi having dismounted to rest his back—and listening to the grumble of the *ludr*-horns, near and far. The whole of the Sognside was awake. Of that there was no doubt. And from every stead and skalli and village the armed men must be thronging inland to learn what was toward. But Swain remained as unconcerned as if he was on *Deathbringer's* poop, with the broad sea under him and a path of escape open to all four quarters.

Under his directions men kindled a fire beside where Jon lay, faint from the loss of blood. Others fetched a kettle, which was filled with pitch Jon's folk had collected from the pines to use in calking his longships. A second kettle was filled with oil. Tubs of water appeared. Cloths were spread on sticks in front of the flames to warm. And Jon's folk and Swain's folk gathered indiscriminately in the circle surrounding the chiefs. Not least interested

was Ingi, who did not share Erling's obvious disconcertion.

As soon as the oil had come to a boil Swain lifted the pot from the fire and placed it on the ground. Then he bade four men lift Jon's unconscious form, and when the Sognman was clear of the ground he dipped the bloody stump in the sizzling kettle. There was a hiss of burning flesh, and a groan was wrung from the wounded man's lips. His eyes opened, and flared evilly at Swain.

"So you torture me," he gasped feebly.

"No, I endeavor to save your life," replied Swain, withdrawing the seared stump from the oil. "Hand me the kettle of pitch, one of you."

Erling thrust aside the house-carls who would have served him, and lifted it down beside where Swain crouched over Jon.

"Up with him again," Swain ordered the four who still held the Sognman.

They raised him, as they had before, and Swain thrust the stump knee-deep into the seething pitch.

This time Jon howled like a dog in pain. The sweat burst out all over his colorless face, and his teeth met in his upper lip. Entirely heedless, absorbed in his own task, Swain presently withdrew the stump, caught a cloth from those which hung by the fire and commenced to wrap up the cauterized wound. This inner bandage he fastened deftly, then fashioned a pad to rest under the stump, and bound it in place. And having done so much, he rolled up a cloak with some other cloths and made a rest under Jon's head.

"So," he said! "I think that now you are likely to live, Jon."

The Sognman peered at him dazedly, and from him to the faces of King Ingi and Erling.

"Why have you done this?" he asked.

"I hewed off your foot in payment of a debt which was owed to you by all of King Ingi's friends," returned Swain. "You were pleased to mock him for being crippled. It is small punishment for you to go through life a cripple, yourself, and will enable you to understand better the spirit with which the King acts, notwithstanding his infirmities."

"I had rather you had slain me," answered Jon bitterly.

"Not at all," said Swain. "Although I was about to say that if you do not meet

my terms I shall be obliged to slay you, notwithstanding I have just been at pains to save your life, as well as those of your folk we have taken, and also burn your property."

Jon winced as he had not under the pain of his wound and Swain's drastic treatment of it.

"What are these terms?" he asked.

"First, that you come to Bergen as soon as you are able, and publicly tender allegiance to King Ingi, beseeching pardon from him for all offences and insults."

Swain waited, and Jon, seeing that an answer was expected, nodded sullenly.

"I will. What else?"

"Second, that you agree to bid the folk who are coming to your assistance to return to their homes and make no attempt to pursue us."

Jon groaned.

"If they will not?" he exclaimed.

"They will," replied Swain sternly. "Or your shame shall be spread throughout Norway."

"I shall have naught but shame out of this business, in any case," replied Jon.

"No," denied Swain. "These scalds here—" he motioned to Armod and Oddi—"shall give you due credit as a brave foe. And so will we all—if you are honorable, as I think you are."

This Jon was a vain fellow, and he was flattered by Swain's promise.

"It is not every man who has a King come raiding to his skalli," he said with the shadow of his former swagger. "Well, I am in your power, and I can do no less than what you bid. But what will Sigurd say to all this?"

"I care not what Sigurd says," answered Swain. "But I advise you to listen to what Norway says."

He turned to the others.

"Is there aught else you would have done, Lord King?" he asked. "Or you, Erling?"

The King smiled.

"Not I, Swain. Who could improve your handiwork?"

Erling was not so happy, but he shook his head.

"Let us away, Swain, in God's good mercy. I shall breathe freely when I see Bergen roofs again."

Swain raised his voice in a shout that drowned the rumbling grunt of the *ludr*-horns, sounding nearer and nearer.

"To me, Swain's men. Our work is finished here."

"Well finished," echoed Ingi.

"It is not to be denied that we may all justly be called King-makers," returned Swain.

IX

 AS SOON as he had made certain that the Sognmen were not giving chase, Swain bade the guide abandon the Uplands for the seaside, where the settlements were numerous and the roads well-traveled.

"Your luck has been with us," said Erling when he heard the order. "But is it wise to stretch it too far?"

"King Ingi has just performed a valiant undertaking," replied Swain. "If it is to do him good the tidings must be circulated, and I propose that we lose no time in spreading the news."

And then he hailed the scalds—

"Ho, scalds, have you used your eyes this night?"

"That have we," cried Oddi. "Here is brave stuff for the verse-smiths to work upon."

"Yes, Oddi and I have no need to quarrel over our tasks," drawled Armod. "Albeit I could wish that he might adjust his verse to a somewhat more polished meter."

"Rhymes for the Frank folk and ladies, Armod," retorted Oddi. "But the seven-beat rhythm for warriors to keep time to on their shields."

"For common folk, perhaps," acceded Armod still languidly. "Yet I beseech you, do not assail the King's—"

"Peace! Peace!" roared Swain. "To hear you scalds, a man might think all Norway hinged upon how you told your tale."

"It does!" barked Oddi.

And Armod added—

"We have good authority for that, Swain."

The Orkneyman grinned, and looked from the scalds to King Ingi and Erling.

"Why, then, carls, you have me tripped in the folds of my own tongue," he admitted. "I will even admit that. But for the gods' sakes, curb your speech, and let ordinary warriors think. When you two fall out it is as if Heimdal, the Keeper of the *Bifrost*, was blowing the Gjallar-horn to give notice of Ragnarok."

"They are rare comrades, these two,"

spoke up King Ingi. "Of them it may be said that 'in the fight they eat steel who afterwards belch words.'"

As it chanced, the first skalli the raiders came to in their march through the seaside was that of Gata Eymund's son, who was kin to Jon. It was mid-morning when they came within view of his stead, and he and his folk, perceiving the column of armed men in the road, naturally took up their weapons and formed a shield-wall to resist them if they meditated harm. But after he saw they were intent only upon marching by Gata left his folk and came to a bank by the road, whence he recognized King Ingi and Erling.

"Ho, King," he shouted. "What do you here?"

"I go upon my business," answered Ingi.

"Is there war betwixt you and Sigurd that you go through Sigurd's lands with your house-carls?"

"No, I have performed an act of private vengeance upon Jon Petr's son with a few of my friends."

Now, Gata waxed exceeding wroth.

"Ha," he jeered, "did you think to fare into the Sognside with Erling and his handful? I know not how many swineherds' huts you burned, but be sure Jon will be upon your heels, and when he comes I will tell how you marched."

"He will not come," answered the King. "Jon's walking days are over. He lacks his left foot, and he has sworn solemn allegiance to me."

Gata danced with rage.

"That is a lie," he shrieked. "With or without his foot, Jon would not swear allegiance to a cripple like you."

At this King Ingi reached out and seized a spear which Armod held and hurled it up at Gata. It pierced his thigh and ran on into the flesh of the other leg, and Gata fell off the bank into the road at the King's feet.

"It seems that you, too, are become a cripple for a while," said Ingi. "Also, it may be said that it is not Swain alone who remembers to make adequate payment of his debts."

And he bade men carry the bondi to one side of the road and leave him upon the grass until the steadfolk should come to his assistance.

"If Armod permits," said the King, "we will leave the spear with Gata for a sign to remember our passing."

Gata cursed at them as they tramped on, but his folk were fearful and never raised a weapon, nor would they go to their chief's help as long as the raiders were within sight.

All the way through the Seaside Swain saw to it that their deeds were celebrated in every stead, so that the tidings actually outran them, and the Bergen folk came forth of the town to welcome them with an enthusiasm King Ingi had become a stranger to. And the night of their arrival the King's drinking-hall was crowded as of yore, with Swain and Erling sitting beside the King on the dais and other lendemen and rich boendr and merchants crowding for place, and foreign folk demanding admission of the guards at the door. For this night Armod and Oddi sang and recited the story of the raid, and of how King Ingi had refused to permit even so powerful a man as Jon Petr's son to cast insults at him and slay his supporters.

"Not as a King he went," they said, "but as a friend whose friends had been wronged."

Men listened with gaping mouths, and the tale flew from place to place. Moreover, Armod and Oddi were provided with ample funds and fast *snekkas*, and they traveled thus to Nidros and Thronthjem and other places, singing King Ingi's exploits, and not forgetting to shower ample credit upon Swain and Erling. Armod went before King Sigurd in open Court and recited his saga with lofty contempt for the growls of rage which accompanied him from the King's courtmen. Sigurd heard him but in silence, and afterwards bestowed on him a heavy gold arm-ring, saying:

"I wish that I had such scalds to wait upon me. It is small wonder that Ingi had wrought the deeds men talked of when he had men like Armod by him."

At this time Armod saw Olvir Rosta, Swain's ancient enemy, and sought to have speech with him that he might tempt him to venture single-combat with Swain, but Olvir would not wait until Armod could

reach him. It was reported that he had bidden King Sigurd watch out, if Swain was become Ingi's man, "for the Orkney-man makes few mistakes."

The end of it all was that as Swain had foretold Ingi's fame spread all over Norway.

"What does it matter if a King be crippled, so that he can use sword and spear?" the warriors would say.

Other scalds took up the lays and sagas Armod and Oddi composed, and for long months little else was discussed whenever folk came together. Jon Petr's son was nicknamed Jon Fot (Foot), and when he delayed in coming to Bergen as he had promised to do, Ingi sent a thrall to him with a message to know whether he considered he had been under-paid. He waited on the King the next week.

And the chiefs in Ingi's lands who had held aloof crowded upon one another's heels to pay him duty and homage. His Court was thronged day and night; his drinking-hall could not seat all who sought entertainment.

It is to be said of Ingi, too, that he was not ungrateful.

"All this I owe to Swain," he said frankly, "and after him, to Erling."

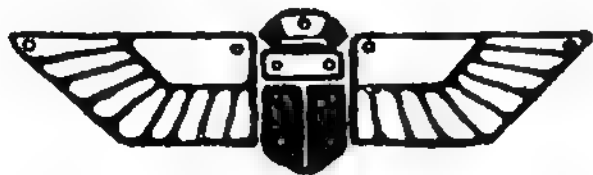
"Not so," objected Erling. "You owe all, first and last, to Swain. I followed, and that fearfully. But I have had my lesson, and the next time I will not suffer the thought of wife and home to intrude in warriors' affairs."

"True talk," growled Swain. "But I counsel you be rid of your wife, princess or no, once you have a son. A woman is an anchor over-heavy for cruising."

"And you, Swain?" asked the King. "Do you stay with us?"

"It is not my way to leave a task half-done," replied Swain gruffly. "We have made the Norse folk respect you. Now we have to make your brothers fear you. What does the old saw say?

"Cool head and heavy hand,
"These rule the Norse land."



The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all
meeting place
for readers,
writers and
adventurers



Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of heaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

HERE'S something for our discussion on the cruelty of bull-fighting:

West Palm Beach, Florida.

Bull-fighting is undoubtedly cruel, and the most cruel part of it is the way the horses get theirs. Having spent a few years in Mexico, Central and South America and having always been an *aficionado* (as they call the bull-fight "fans"), I have frequently discussed this cruelty to horses.

LOOK at it a minute from the horse's standpoint.

The horses they use in Mexico City, or did years ago, were usually ready for the bone-pile. If you were a horse, which would you rather do, be compelled to drag a truck or coach around 15 or 20 hours a day for the last three or five years of your life, without sufficient food, beaten often till you fall to the ground; or would you be willing to suffer the agony of the result of the bull's horns for from five to fifteen minutes and then never suffer any more? Some question? Yet that is the ground that many people take for not objecting too strenuously to the *picadores*. And I have heard that in

some of the countries the horse is really protected by the *picador* and frequently not injured at all; in those cases they are said to use fine and skilled horses. The dead horses in Mexico were given to the starving peons for food. Horse steak was usually served all over the city Monday mornings.

I MUST disagree with you about the sympathy for the bull, brother. If he doesn't want to fight, to the death, three or four cows are sent into the ring with him and he is glad to accompany them from the ring; and probably then goes to the slaughter-house. If he wants to fight (and it is usually the case with the better trained animals), he has the chance, and sometimes wins.

In 1906-7 I spent some time in Mexico City and frequently saw Montes, Fuentes, Cocherito, Bombita Chico and others of the best Spanish bull-fighters in action. The first two were remarkable; the others little less so. And I got to know and admire Antonio Montes. In January, 1907, Montes, while doing one of the most difficult of feats—placing the very small 6-inch *banderillas* in the bull's shoulders, leaping from a sitting position

directly in front of the bull—was seriously gored and died four days later. A crowd of Missouri politicians was in one of the boxes, I think Ex-Gov. Francis among them.

Montes was a gentleman, in addition to being a wonderful athlete. He left a fortune estimated at \$200,000 to his widowed mother and sister. Maybe seeing that happen to an acquaintance has prejudiced me against the bull; but if we can't agree on that, I will agree with you about the horses. Many of the *paisanos* will also agree with you on that.

Down here trying to catch me an "amberjack;" next month a tarpon over at Sarasota. May get to New York in the meantime. About four years ago this summer you had a letter from me, following my world's record altitude flight in an aeroplane with three others in N. Y.—J. I. MATHER.

ON THE occasion of his first story in our magazine, Alex McLaren follows Camp-Fire custom and rises—no, not to introduce himself, for we've already met him at the blaze, but to tell us a bit about himself for a change:

Hollywood, California.

The last time that I sat in this congenial circle, I think Gila monsters were the topic, and even although bearing upon a repulsive reptile, we managed a very pleasant discussion. This trip is different and I sit down with an old saying ringing warningly in my ears—"Self-praise is half scandal."

I may liken this visit somewhat to one made to the office of a scenario editor who was interested in discussing one of my screen stories. I opened the confab by asking him if my visit could not be likened to one attending his own inquest. Now this occurs to me as writing my own obituary, but I'm built on the do-anything-once plan, so edge over, fellers, an' let me hop to it.

BORN in Glasgow, Scotland, at an early age.

The exact date is of no importance. Let it suffice that I have passed the half-century mile-post on the long trail—yes, it's some little piece back. Came with my parents to the good old U. S.—also at an early age, and was shipped to Southwestern Texas, down close to the Rio Grande. For a number of years I chased the festive longhorns all over the map of Texas, Indian Territory, New Mexico and Arizona, packed for the Government, acted as guide and interpreter. Heard a cowcamp philosopher say that a rolling stone gathers no moss, and I stayed put for a while until another equally wise guy came along and told me on the quiet that a setting hen never got fat. I saw wisdom in his words and started rolling again, and did all of Mexico. Managed to land in jail twice down there—once when acting in capacity of interpreter for an Irishman who had been swindled at a *fiesta*—then once for taking a photograph of a *carcel*. Both times I came out right side up an' well populated. Take it all in all, I have no kick coming against the people down there at all.

THEN I took up mining—made a study of it, and for quite a few years that has been my vocation. I have held every job the industry affords except accounting; I loathe figures—in ledgers. Have been everything from master of the muck-

stick to general manager. But any one who sticks to the mining game for any length of time generally leans more heavily toward one branch than another; for the last twenty years have specialized on the extraction end, and have designed, erected and operated milling plants for recovery of gold, silver, lead, copper and zinc values all over this continent, and others, from the Arctic to the Equator—yes, south of it.

Have always had a nose for story material and a desire to hand it back to the world on paper. Have had several things on the screen, but not bragging any about them.

ADVENTURES? Well, one can hardly roam about without including some of that spice in life. I often recall one trip into Mexico as interpreter for a horse-trader. We were captured by a roving bunch of bandits, thrown into an adobe while our captors held a council of war—rather a council of disposal—over a fire outside. The council lasted all night and somehow or other I didn't sleep any at all for listening to the cute little plans offered for getting us out of the way; everything from a Mauser bullet to slow starvation in an abandoned tunnel was suggested. My partner or employer was saved, much mental annoyance by ignorance of the language—I wished several times that I'd never learned it—at any rate the horse-trader snored thru the whole affair. In searching me, they had overlooked a .44 Colt I had under arm next my skin. I laid more store on that than I ever did before on any shootin'-iron. My mind was fully made up that in event of going I wouldn't do so in a lonely way—that there would be several new faces in hell.

Close on toward the hour set for our departure, a man rode excitedly in to camp and told of a detachment of Federals nearby. Our hosts forgot all about us in their haste to get away. So it is I am still here.

REGARDING "A Rimrock Judas," which is the cause of me disgorging all the foregoing, will say the main incident of the story is the outgrowth of one in real life that I happened onto in Northern California. The four principal characters are composites—brain children built from fragments of the human tumbleweeds of the mining West. My one desire is that it will entertain, for if so, love's labor will not have been lost.

Su atento y seguro servidor.—ALEX McLAREN.

OUR Camp-Fire, so far as its natural limitations permit, is an open forum for free expression of opinion and particularly what might be called a court of very general sessions for speaking for or against any feature of our magazine. In our occasional in fact articles and so far as fact enters into our fiction it is especially desirable to get the additional checking up that only such an audience as ours can give. *Adventure*, with this and other helps from its readers, has built up a solid reputation for accuracy and careful adherence to the facts from which its stories are made—most of all in historical fact,

color, background and spirit. It has taken too many years to earn that reputation and the reputation is too valuable to be sacrificed by neglecting any of the things that built it up.

Sometimes it seems not the best use of so much of our limited space to print arguments as to facts between a reader and an author. All of them can not, of course, find place and would give too much sameness, and it's difficult to draw the line between printing too many and not printing a sufficient number to show our eagerness for accuracy, our recognition of the value of such letters in securing it and our desire to give all sides a hearing. Also we don't want to harry our writers to death by too often carrying these arguments into print. Usually, I'm glad to say, our writers come off first-best, but neither do we wish to seem to advertise a reader as mistaken when his only intention was to be of friendly service.

OF COURSE, some cases are easy. If an author or one of us in the office has made a mistake that was recognized as soon as pointed out, we flatly admit the mistake and raise no argument. Or if a criticism is palpably unsound, we don't bring it before Camp-Fire—except once every year or so when one is nasty enough to get my individual goat. Again, if the point in dispute is sufficiently important to call for everybody's judgment or testimony, we always print it. Still again, though the point itself may not be highly important, the discussion is often interesting and informative reading and ought to be passed on to you.

ALL of which boils down to this: *Adventure's* hard-earned and tested reputation for dependability and its reputation for fair dealing are highly valued by all of us. It's often hard to know what to print and what to pass by. Bear with me when I swing too far in either direction, but don't hesitate to tell me how you feel about it.

Here's an interesting letter from B. M. Bower whose fiction is known to all of you and who, though not one of our own writer's brigade, is a comrade at our Camp-Fire. And an interesting reply from F. R. Bechdolt. Whatever the decision on the points raised, we all know that Mr. Bechdolt's articles came through the reader

test—particularly the old-timer reader test—with flying colors. Indefatigable in running down all available evidence, he had the task of selecting from conflicting versions on thousands of points those that seemed on the whole best supported and his judgment in so doing has been amply tested and proved. No historian can ask for a better verdict.

Las Vegas, Nevada.

This will seem somewhat belated, since the article I am thinking of, "Cassidy and the Wild Bunch," by Frederick R. Bechdolt, was published in the April 30th, 1923, number of *Adventure*. In lieu of an apology I will point out the fact that I keep my *Adventures* and go prowling through back numbers occasionally. I did not read the article when it was fresh, I may explain.

I believe that *Adventure* and its writer-folk are anxious that historic stuff should be accurate. I know how difficult it is for any author to glean authentic data concerning our men of the West who stand out in the memory of old-timers for one reason or another, and I want to thank Mr. Bechdolt now for a most interesting and helpful article. Some of the stuff was new to me. One point I feel impelled to correct, however.

BUTCH CASSIDY'S memory was surely faulty when he told Beecher Sheldon in Reno that he had never killed a man. One day in the early part of June, 1893, a bunch of cattle was being worked about eight miles from Split Rock on the Sweetwater and about twelve miles from the Bothwell ranch—the old Pick outfit.

Butch Cassidy rode up to the roundup, drew his gun and shot a young fellow they called "Sand Creek" through the body, killing him on the spot. He turned to the other boys and said, "Any of you fellows want to make change? I got a few left." Then he added, "This man tried to murder me when I wasn't lookin'. I never shot *him* in the back!" He rode off, and no one tried to stop him. They hauled the young man home and buried him, and that closed the incident. "Sand Creek" had attempted to waylay Butch and shoot him for the reward that was then offered for Butch. He missed. Butch didn't. That no one interfered is not surprising. It was a mind-your-own-business country, remember, and Butch took the time to explain to the boys his reason for the killing.

While I was not an eyewitness to this, a friend whose word is absolutely good with me and all who know him was sitting on his horse less than fifty yards from "Sand Creek"; saw the killing and heard Butch's remarks on the subject. I take it that he ought to know whether Butch ever killed a man.

BUTCH had the name of a killer when he felt his cause was good. I cannot vouch for other killings, though I do know a very circumstantial story of how he drove into town with a load of hay, went into a saloon where two detectives waited for him. He took a drink with them, unsuspectingly standing between the two. They stuck their six-guns in his ribs and told Butch to "put 'em up." Butch did, and grinned:

"Well, boys, you've got me cheated! I wasn't lookin' fer this right in my home town, or I'd 'a' wore my guns." Dressed in blue jumper and overalls, no guns were in evidence. The officers took it for granted and let Butch lower his hands—and he shot them both and beat it.

I merely repeat the story, but while it was told among the cowpunchers at the time, it may not have been true. The other story is, however. So after all Butch Cassidy ran true to form and to me he lacks the aura of romantic chivalry—the outlaw who "never done wrong." Let us writer-folk put in the glamour to suit our taste and yours—but don't you believe those old lawless ones were such admirable characters in reality.

THERE'S Kid Curry. I lived not far, as range distance goes, from the Curry ranch and Landusky at the time old Pike Landusky was killed. Pike was shot on his own doorstep as he was leaving the house in the morning to go to the stable. The killer was cached on a sidehill overlooking the place, which doesn't seem such a fair fight, after all—except from the warped viewpoints of such men as the Wild Bunch. Kid Curry probably thought he had good reason for killing from ambush, just as Butch Cassidy justified his shooting of Sand Creek.

I have known several outlaws, and many others who were "on the dodge" a good part of the time, but I never realized that I was living in a tough country until afterward. The train holdup at Wagner was just a neighborhood happening at the time, and all the real outlaws lived down in Texas or somewhere, and the boys whom Texas called the outlaws were just fellows we knew. Sometimes they failed to show up at dances, and we knew they were on the dodge at the time. Ordinary fellows—mean, some of them—with neither halos nor extraordinary nerve and endurance. That's as I knew them; they do sound different on paper, I admit.—B. M. BOWER.

Carmel, California.

According to the best available data Butch Cassidy was not on the Sweetwater in 1893. Nor was there at that time a reward out for him.

Dates are tricky. Will Simpson, who was prosecuting attorney when Cassidy was convicted of grand larceny, gives the time of his prison term as beginning in the Summer of '93. Pinkerton data gives it as '94. If he were in jail he could not have done the killing. And prior to his arrest he was up in the Lost Cabin country—then down below Green River.

BUT that is not the point. Nor is it of any use to argue as to the authenticity of this tale—although neither State authorities nor Pinkertons can furnish any record of his having done a killing prior to his prison term. The idea is this:

I placed no halo round Cassidy's head. Such a killing would have been in line with his character as I outlined it. He was tough. I said so plainly. Furthermore, according to this Sweetwater story, the boy, "Sand Creek," took a chance at some easy money by trying to pot a man from behind. Many a cowboy who had not gone wrong would have shot him under those circumstances. And few men—in those days—would have wasted any sympathy over the victim. He got what he was looking for.

THE other tale I have no hesitation in putting down as pure moonshine. There are ten dozen like it—and I have put in a lot of time running them down. As to Logan—I said he was a killer in just about so many words. I also heard the Pike Landusky story as B. M. Bower outlines it. I chose the other version which may not have been the right one, but which was given credence when I was in Montana. But I said no word to indicate that Harvey Logan was not mighty free with his six-shooter.

I did not try to make Cassidy a romantic figure. Had I heard this Sweetwater tale—and been able to get any verification—I would have included it in my article, and it would have been in tune with the rest of the story. But I think it remarkable that, if true, this incident remained unknown to Wyoming sheriffs, Wyoming's governor, the Pinkerton Detective Agency and several men who knew Cassidy intimately—two of them through having ridden with him when he was on the run.—F. R. BECH-DOLT.

My opinion on the points of debate isn't worth listening to, but on one point on which both writers seem to agree I beg to be counted in. The bad-man isn't my idea of a hero. He's generally a pretty rotten mess—to be credited for courage, audacity and whatever other virtues he may possess, with full allowance made for environment and circumstances beyond his control, but on the whole deserving of our contempt rather than our admiration. Even the average Congressman has nerve or other good points, but that's no reason for admiring him.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, V. E. Pyles, who drew the headings for this issue of our magazine, rises to introduce himself:

New York City.

I'm delighted to join the bunch gathered around the Camp-Fire with its full share of hospitality and good fellowship.

IN ANSWER to a question regarding my earlier activities and experiences, I must admit my early boyhood was prosaic enough. I was born and raised on my dad's stock farm near LaGrange, Ky., under the care and guidance of an old black mammy. The greatest excitement for me at that time consisted of breaking in colts, which was always most thrilling.

At the age of eighteen I took a great dislike to the farm, so I left for Chicago, where I spent two years deeply interested in the study of art. Then feeling the call of a larger city I hit for New York. Shortly after this the United States entered the War and, feeling that I could not miss the greatest adventure of all, I signed up with the 7th Reg. N. G. N. Y. After spending a zero Winter in the Sunny South in camp, we left for France, where we immediately took over a sector of the British front in Belgium at Ypres.

WE REMAINED on this front for four months, where we became well acquainted with the muddy trenches of Flanders and all that went with it. We were then sent to the St. Quentin front where we took part in the drive on the Hindenburg Line which lasted for eighteen days. Our company was placed in the first wave of shock troops to go over in the advance. We were following the barrage closely and had crossed two lines of enemy trenches. The third line trench was on the top of a steep hill. After the barrage had crossed the enemy's trench, I saw immediately in front of me three boche come up from their dugout and run for a little clump of brush on the parapet of their trench where a machine-gun was concealed. I charged with my bayonet, hoping that their gun would jam. It worked, however, and as the result I am the possessor of a platinum jaw as a souvenir.—V. E. PYLES.

FROM M. Ward Brown comes this clipping from the Miami (Fla.) *Herald* giving another answer to our old question "What is adventure?"

A missionary bishop, who has traveled a million and a half miles by all kinds of conveyance in every land under the sun, was interviewed the other day. The reporter asked him to relate some of his adventures and the good bishop replied by asking, "Adventure, what is it?"

It seems that in all his travels he has never had the sort of thrill that comes from a hold-up, or from being kidnapped or poisoned, or anything like that. All that came to him came in the ordinary course of his duties and as he was not seeking adventure he did not find it.

Adventure does not come from what happens to a person from the outside, but from a spirit within. Some people can stand without emotion in the presence of the Grand Cañon. Others find romance and adventure in a noisy city street. Adventure grows out of eagerness of spirit to find the unusual in life. If the spirit is there the adventures will come, wherever one may be.

FROM Arthur D. Howden Smith a few words concerning the new *Swain* series that begins in this issue, dealing with events in *Swain's* life that did not figure in our former tales of him:

Argyle Park, Babylon, Long Island.

"Swain's Payment" is the first of a series of stories dealing with one of the most eventful periods of Norse history, the struggle for the throne between the three sons of King Harald Gillichris and several incidental pretenders, which culminated in the reign of King Magnus Erling's son. It is interesting from a number of angles, and fortunately the great Iceland historian, Snorri Sturlason, who composed the wonderful *Heimskringla* Saga, or Saga of the Kings—undoubtedly one of the two or three greatest works of the Middle Ages, if not the greatest—has left us ample records in his Saga of the Sons of Harald, Saga of Hakon Heruabreid and Magnus Erling's son's Saga.

AT THIS time the growing power of the nations of Western Europe was curbing drastically the viking forays which had contributed so substantially to Norway's wealth for several hundred years. The development of the feudal system, the increase in number and strength of fortified towns and castles, the wider use of armor and especially of cavalry, the growth of English, Flemish and French shipping and naval power, all these factors combined to make successful raids more difficult from year to year. As Swain was one of the last of the private chiefs who made viking-faring profitable, so King Eystein Harald's son—one of the three brothers mentioned above and referred to in "Swain's Payment"—was practically the last Norse King who conducted a royal viking raid, and it is significant that he limited his expedition to Scotland and the northeast coast of England, and attained only a dubious success.

The struggle for the Norse crown which will be developed in subsequent stories was complicated in its final stages by this very turning back of the Norsemen from the sea, whereon the younger and wilder spirits had been accustomed to seek their livelihood. A considerable number of this element, denied the viking life by the force of circumstances, turned outlaws at home, took to the forests and under the name of Birkbeiners became in the outcome a political and dynastic faction which fought for control of the country on almost equal terms with King Magnus Erling's son.

IN "SWAIN'S PAYMENT," as in other stories, I must occasionally take liberties with facts and definite personalities, but my main effort is to carry to the reader an authentic picture of an episode or event, and this will not suffer by any such liberties. In "Swain's Payment" the trouble with Jon Fot is based upon an actual occurrence set forth in the "Orkneyinga Saga," but I was obliged to alter it to suit my purpose, which was to illustrate the means by which Swain undertook—in advertising slang—to "sell" King Ingi to his subjects.—ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH.

THE United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company has sent to every bank holding its bonds or policies against burglary or hold-up a brass sign offering \$1000 to any officer or employee of the bank who captures *dead or alive* one or more persons undertaking to rob or burglarize the bank. A booklet prepared at the request of the president of the company by Ronald A. Foster and John E. Messick, managers for the company at Indianapolis, is addressed to bankers of the United States and Canada and the major part of it is a logical, hard-headed, and far-seeing argument against taking from the law-abiding citizen his right to arms for his protection. It is significant that they recognize that rewards can be only a minor factor in meeting the crime-wave and that the greatest need is a citizenry free to have and to bear arms in accordance with the right expressly given

by the Constitution of the United States.

Those of the anti-weapon advocates who are sincere seem to believe that by no possibility can any one disagree with them unless he is lawlessly inclined or at least irresponsible and harum-scarum. It should be something of a shock to find the bankers arrayed against them.

Below are such parts of the booklet as bear more directly upon the weapon question. You'll note that is not merely a plea from bankers to win for bankers the right to protect their property but a straight-from-the-shoulder argument from Americans in favor of preserving this right to all law-abiding Americans. The writers ask that acknowledgment be made to Malcolm Ross Matheson of Brooklyn for the use of certain paragraphs taken, with his permission, practically verbatim from a letter of his published some time ago in our "Camp-Fire."

One sentence stands out crystal clear: *"The right to protect one's property against lawless attack is the oldest prerogative of man."* Yes, but what can even that mean to the shallow brains who can't think back even so far as the Constitution of the United States, who expect anti-weapon laws to reduce crime even after seeing that in actual practise crime has increased under such laws, who haven't sufficient horse sense to know that if we can't suppress bottles, jugs and barrels, even with tremendous effort and expense, we can't suppress revolvers, and who see nothing humorous—and significant—in the fact that the criminals themselves meet the prospect of anti-weapon laws with cheerfulness and a grin?

Prior to 1918, a "hold-up"—daylight robbery by force or intimidation—was almost unheard of.

Until the post-war period, such crimes were so infrequent that a daylight robbery, even of a minor sum, was an incident of national importance, attracting widespread notice and heralded with glaring headlines in all newspapers.

Similar crimes today are of such alarming frequency that a case involving twenty thousand dollars would receive scant space in the newspapers, unless accompanied by murder or some unusual feature. Therefore, in self-preservation, burglary insurance companies have been compelled to charge an additional premium for the hold-up hazard. The losses have been frequent and heavy and the rate has mounted so steadily that robbery insurance is now a heavy item of expense to bankers. Yet with few exceptions they now recognize that the protection is essential.

WITHOUT criticism of the police, and with the greatest admiration for the many brave officers who daily risk and often lose their lives in

the performance of duty, we feel that the situation is taxing the capacity of our duly-constituted authorities. We believe the time has come when unlawful force must be met with lawful force.

The right to protect one's property against lawless attack is the oldest prerogative of man. We have great faith in American manliness and believe that the crime wave will be checked or greatly diminished when bandits realize that the likelihood of armed resistance is even greater than the probability of capture. Capture is doubtful and carries only the prospect of a trial, perhaps long delayed. Unless the bandit has actually killed his victim he faces at the most a prison sentence with the chance of an early parole.

UNFORTUNATELY, there has developed in our country an active and rapidly spreading propaganda in favor of an anti-weapon law. Some of the propagandists declare for a sweeping embargo upon the possession, manufacture or sale of firearms of all descriptions. The majority of them, however, confine their opposition to pistols and revolvers. This is more serious than it appears. It is particularly serious for institutions like banks and insurance companies—responsible, as they are, for money and securities—for they are the special objects of attack by criminals.

If we reach a point where unlawful force cannot be met on approximately equal terms by lawful force, chaos indeed must result. No reasonable person can oppose the strictest possible regulation of the sale and ownership of arms. An anti-weapon law, however, is the radical measure which will disarm the good citizen and leave the crook armed.

PROPAGANDA for any new, sumptuary law has two kinds of followers:

First—Misguided, well-meaning persons, who in all sincerity feel that the proposed law is for the common good.

Second—Individuals who for some secret, selfish purpose of their own urge the passage of the new law.

Undoubtedly, there are many sincere persons who feel that, inasmuch as crimes are frequently committed with firearms, particularly with revolvers and pistols, we can stop crime by abolishing "hand-guns." The majority of them, however, have not considered the consequences of such a law.

The State of New York tried the experiment known as the "Sullivan Revolver Law," forbidding any citizen of New York to own a pistol, even if kept in his office or home. Since that time pistol homicides in New York have almost doubled. Highway robberies and hold-ups increased to such an extent that leading burglary insurance companies wrote an open letter to the legislature of New York requesting that the law be amended to permit law-abiding citizens to own firearms. Since the passage of the Sullivan Law, robbery insurance rates in New York have increased several hundred per cent.

No deterrent effect, therefore, can be claimed for the law. It has operated like the majority of laws designed to regulate personal conduct. Good citizens have sought to comply with it, but crooks and criminals have no difficulty in procuring all the arms they desire. Laws are not really enforced, they are obeyed. A law which finds no response in the majority of human hearts can never be "enforced."

IT WOULD be interesting to know just who is principally responsible for the anti-weapon propaganda. Is it not possible that foreign support is back of the movement? Foreign arms manufacturers are today flooding the American market with "one-hand" guns at prices far below those of domestic manufacturers. We have before us a half-dozen advertisements, clipped from various magazines, exploiting what appear to be imitations of well-known, reliable American-made arms, at about half price. In some advertisements no makers' name is given. Others frankly assert foreign origin. Hence, before anyone espouses the cause of a sumptuary anti-weapon law, either state or national, he should seriously consider:

First—Would not our Government have more difficulty in preventing the smuggling of foreign arms than it is now having with rum-smuggling? Liquor is heavier, bulkier, more perishable and can be detected by its odor.

Second—Considering the immense sum of public money being spent annually in the effort to stop rum-smuggling, how expensive an enforcement organization would it load upon the taxpayer to undertake to prevent the surreptitious importation of foreign pistols?

Third—How would it be possible to find and confiscate the millions of revolvers and pistols now in this country? The good citizen would surrender his, but those in the hands of criminals would be secreted. Even assuming that the supply might thus be somewhat reduced, could not one pistol be lent or rented and serve the purpose of a dozen criminals?

Fourth—How could we prevent a criminal from buying a rifle or shotgun, sawing off the barrel, cutting off the stock at the pistol grip, and thus making the most deadly short-range weapon imaginable? An arm of the "horse-pistol" type can be made from a piece of gas pipe or various other makeshift materials. One of the most dangerous and subtle weapons in criminal history was the crutch of a murderer, the lower half of the crutch being chambered for a shotgun shell.

BUT, taking it for granted that the enforcement could be made effective, we could not prevent the use of knives or hatchets or clubs. With any weapon, however makeshift, the criminal has at a disadvantage the law-abiding citizen who does not constantly think in terms of violence. Such a citizen, therefore, should have the right to arm himself with a modern weapon. It would certainly afford him little protection to wave a copy of the anti-pistol law at the crook who might attack him with knife or bludgeon.

Any hold-up man is a potential "killer." He is a killer by reason of his mental processes and not because of his armament. Let him resolve to do a deed of violence and the deed is more than half done. True, he will seek to arm himself upon approximately even terms with his intended victim, but should we reach that Utopian condition where neither bankers nor bandits could possibly have any weapons save hoe-handles, our bandit would go forward just as blithely with the latter as he does with his "gat."

TWO letters from E. A. Brininstool concerning some of his statements in our June 10th issue:

Los Angeles, California.

I note my article on the Custer fight in the current issue, and also note an error—of my own making, by the way. I stated that Reno lost 29 men while climbing the bluffs after charging through the Indians and crossing the river. This is a mistake. Most of these men were killed in the retreat from the timber to the ford. Therefore I will correct myself on that point before anybody else does.—E. A. BRININSTOOL.

In my letter of yesterday, correcting an error, I forgot to state that if any one is sufficiently interested in this discussion regarding the actions of Major Reno in the battle of the Little Big Horn, I would refer them to the July number of the *Hunter, Trader & Trapper*, in which an article of mine is to appear, entitled "Was Reno a Coward?" In this article I make lengthy quotations from the testimony of numerous witnesses at the Reno Court of Inquiry held in Chicago, in 1879, proving my assertion that Major Reno was *not* branded as a coward by his officers and men, however much the general public would have it the other way, and that (if the testimony of these witnesses was true—and there is no reason for thinking it was anything but true) Reno has been a badly maligned man for 48 years. I am aware that Major Reno was dismissed from the army in 1880, but that has nothing to do with his conduct at the battle of the Little Big Horn. Major Reno came out of the Civil War with a brilliant record for bravery and efficiency, and if conditions had been reversed and it had been Custer instead of Reno who had the fight in the river bottom, doubtless he, too, would have been just as severely censured by the public as Reno was.—E. A. BRININSTOOL.

P.S. In commending my friend W. M. Camp as to his knowledge of affairs pertaining to the battle of the Little Big Horn, I stated that he "had conversed with all the Indians now living who took part in that fight." It seems that I made an over-estimate on this, as Mr. Camp writes me that he has talked with only about 150 of the Sioux and Cheyennes who took part in the fight and he estimates that there are yet living four or five times that number of Indians who were there.

What I have said in defense of Major Reno is *what the official records say*—and if we can not accept those, then historians might as well close up shop and go into some other line of activity. The officers yet alive who testified know themselves whether they told the truth or not—and there is no reason for thinking they did not tell the truth. I happen to possess a photostat copy of the full stenographic report of the Reno Inquiry—nearly or quite 184 columns of testimony, and it is supposed to be correct.—E. A. BRININSTOOL.

AFTER strongly commending the stories of Hugh Pendexter and Alanson Skinner for their soundness from the historical point of view and their underlying knowledge of the Indian, Alvin H. Dewey, president of the Lewis H. Morgan Chapter

of the New York State Archeological Association, ends his letter with the following paragraph which I take particular pleasure in passing on to you:

Rochester, New York.

As President of the New York State Archeological Association, we would like to get the idea across to the reading public that our Indians were real human beings and not the murderous, treacherous devils that they are generally pictured by writers of lore dealing with Indian monstrosities.—ALVIN H. DEWEY.

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow.



A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

Arizona—200—Clifton. C. Hooker.

209—Quartzite. Buck Conner, Box 4.

Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.

California—28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, Cottage Inn.

38—Los Angeles. Colonel Wm. Strover, Westlake Military School, Mount Washington.

60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.

73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.

74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.

89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.

108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.

113—Vallejo. Edith G. Engesser, Golden Triangle Rabbitry, Highway Homes.

114—Mill Valley. Louis F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.

115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.

116—Sebastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.

126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham, Box 388.

141—Santa Cruz. A. W. Wyatt, Capitola Road and Jose Ave.

149—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press, 1264 Valencia St.

186—Santa Ysabel. William Strover, Santa Ysabel Inn.

210—Berkeley. Dr. Louis C. Mullikin, 305 Acheson Bldg.

211—Pomona. Fred G. Sunley, 480 E. Alverado St.
212—Del Monte. Alex H. Sokoloff, 3rd Signal Co. R. O. T. C.

231—San Francisco. Earl V. Swift, 24-A Brady St.

251—Williams. Joe Lanouette, Opera Pool Hall.

252—Fresno. Mrs. Harriet Church, Echo Gardens, 712 Echo Ave.

Colorado—105—Grand Junction. Bart Lynch, 236 Main St.

176—Denver. Elmer S. Burrows, 3407 Larimer St.

Connecticut—103—New Haven. Ralph Pierson, 3 Yale Station.

142—Meriden. Homer H. Brown, 1 Colony Place.

Delaware—232—Delmar. J. A. Aniba, Stone House Hotel.

D. C.—107—Washington. Walter A. Sheil, 503 Sixth St. N. E.

Florida—87—Miami. A. C. Smith, 49 N. E. First St.

117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.

128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.

139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.

143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.

158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care Call.

188—Johnson. Clifford Martin.

Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald*.

Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.

Illinois—47—Peoria. B. H. Coffeen.

66—Mt. Carmel. W. C. Carter, 1122 Chestnut St.

67—Plainfield. J. P. Glass, The Linshield Co.

189—Chicago. Herman A. Schell, 8708 Vincennes Ave.

213—Chicago. Pietro Ferraro, 1007 S. Peoria St.

237—Chicago. Wm. Churchill, 6541 S. State St.

253—Chicago. G. C. Huebner, 1015 Oakdale Ave.

Indiana—18—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin, 112 East Eighteenth St.

90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.

180—Warsaw. Homer Lewis.

Iowa—238—Atlantic. George Woodbury, 5 E Third St.

Kansas—228—Leavenworth. Ben H. Lukenbill, 315 Shawnee St.

Kentucky—144—Corbin. Keith Mauney.

190—Louisville. H. S. Summers, 421 W. Jefferson St.

Louisiana—191—Melville. Wm. P. Stephens.

202—New Orleans. W. Bailey, 1116 Iberville St., Cor. Basin.

228—St. Rose. C. M. Elfer.

Maine—19—Bangor. Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St.

59—Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73 1/2 Bridge St.

111—Lewiston. Howard N. Lary, 714 Main Street.

243—Winthrop. O. A. Abbot.

Maryland—55—Baltimore. Henry W. L. Fricke, 1200 E. Madison St., at Asquith.

82—Baltimore. Joseph Patti, Jr., 4014 E. Lombard St.

151—Williamsport. L. J. Schaefer, Frederick St.

Michigan—69—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1133 Lincoln Ave., N. W.

79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109 1/2 N. Washington Ave.

106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.

131—North Muskegon. James Fort Forsyth, Forsyth Publisher's Service, Phone 5801.

137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.

192—Pickford. Dr. J. A. Cameron, The Grand Theater.

227—Adrian. S. N. Cook, 221 Clinton St.

Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul Daily News, 92 E. Fourth St.

145—Brainerd. F. T. Tracey, care Brainerd Gas & Electric Co.

Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Box 244.

99—Picayune. D. E. Jonson.

Missouri—51—St. Louis. W. R. Hoyt, 7921 Van Buren St., phone Riverside 250.

94—St. Louis. C. Carter Lee, M. D., 3810 Olive St.

127—Salem. Emmet C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.

Montana—210—Fort Missoula, Company C, 4th Infantry.

254—Hamilton. Mrs. Lucy Hyde, 64 N. Second St.

Nebraska—95—Omaha. L. W. Stewart, 119 No. 16th St.

214—Tecumseh. Dr. C. F. Roh.

New Mexico—96—Silver City. Edward S. Jackson, Box 435.

203—Elephant Butte via Engle. Henry Stein.

229—Santa Fe. N. Howard Thorp, 103 Palace Ave.

New Jersey—17—Caldwell. Chas. A. Gerlard, Box 13.

164—Chatham. Roy S. Tinney.

91—Tenafly. Ed Stiles, P. O. Box 254.

146—Paterson. Charles S. Gall, 378 Dakota St.

244—East Orange. Alfred C. Swenson, 77 Lawton St.

245—Corbin City. Lee Roberts.

New York—23—Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 906 Jefferson St.

34—New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 143 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.

107—New York City. Bronx Division, U. S. Junior Naval Reserves, 3132 Webster Ave.

147—Youngsville. Harry Malowitz, Youngsville House.
 165—Saratoga. Wm. Marshall, Office No. 9, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
 177—Brooklyn. George Iverson, 306 Macon St.
 185—Brooklyn. J. M. Canavan, 69 Bond St.
 193—Niagara Falls. Roy Tompkins, 1155 Garret Ave.
 194—Hadley. Mrs. Chas. H. Black.
 205—Newburgh. Jacques Teller, 5 Golden St.
 215—George's Sport Shop, 45 Main St., Yonkers.
 226—Red Hook. P. W. E. Hart, The Silver Birch Shop, Albany Post Road, Dutchess Co.
 233—Albany. R. N. Bradley, 84 Livingston Ave.
 239—Brooklyn. Arthur Borchmann, 451 Rodney St.
 246—Utica. Geo. N. Webb, 730 Columbia Ave.
North Carolina—133—Pine Bluff. N. Steve Hutchings.
 159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
 92—Biltmore. C. Marshall Gravatt, Felstone Co.
 255—Tryon. Howard Shannon.
North Dakota—160—Fargo. James E. Cowan, Central Garage, rear Grand Theater.
 206—Fairmount. Frank Kitchener, Richland Hotel.
Ohio—58—Cleveland. J. P. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
 52—Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
 63—Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
 75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
 113—Buena Vista. Geo. T. Watters.
 166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
 207—Columbus. Tod S. Raper, 77 Taylor Ave.
 241—Cincinnati. D. W. Davidson, 1414 Vine St.
 242—Bellevue. Harry E. Edselle, 328 Plum-valley St.
Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
 225—Shawnee. A. M. Postlethwaite, 521 N. Beard St.
 234—Blackwell. H. W. Willis, 204½ N. Main St.
Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.
 187—Portland. W. J. Belduke, 26½ N. Ninth St.
 216—Portland. Miss Billie Russell, 532 E. 19th St.
Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 252 S. Ninth St.
 21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
 24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach, 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
 78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Szarmach, 350 Harmer St.
 100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 926 N. 41st St.
 121—Philadelphia. Don L. Brown, 3444 D St.
 152—Harrisburg. Mrs. L. H. Wistrand, Washington Heights, Lemoyne.
 182—Greensburg. Don Frederick Wermuth.
 224—Oil City. J. M. Blair, 608 W. Front St.
 247—Pittsburgh. J. F. Lichtenhaler, 224 Swope St.
 248—Philadelphia. Carl D. Charles, 214 East St., Wissahickon.
South Dakota—179—Fairburn. Jesse K. Fell, *Custer County Press*.
South Carolina—217—Charleston. J. H. Keener, 346 King St.
 97—Charleston. J. W. Mette, Navy Yard.
Tennessee—195—Knoxville. C. G. Pruden, 2024 Rose Ave.
Texas—33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 4805 Oakland St.
 123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
 134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
 148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
 174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
 183—South San Antonio. J. F. Nicodemus, Box 111, So. San Antonio Transfer.
 218—Fort Worth. Robert Lentz, R. No. 6 Box 73.
 208—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West 8th St.
 256—Dallas. L. H. Baker, 3205 Dallas St.
Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.
Vermont—56—Fort Ethan Allen. E. Worth Benson, Box 10.
Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, Custom House Building.
 219—Richmond. Wm. Meek, 104 S. 1st St.
Washington—1—Ione. A. S. Albert, Albert's Billiard Hall.
 61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertson, Fairhaven Ave.
 83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
 154—Mt. Vernon. Miss Beatrice Bell, Western Washington Auto Club.
 155—Olympia. B. F. Hume, Commercial Club Rooms.
 172—Sunnyside. Mark Austin.
 196—Arlington. F. T. Herzinger.
 220—Sultan. George W. Snyder, Main St., opp. Post Office.
West Virginia—48—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.
Wisconsin—41—Madison. Frank Weston, 401 Gay Bldg.
 5—Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt. V, 1305 Cedar St.

138—Tomahawk Lake. Mrs. J. S. Hughson, Hughson's Resort.
Australia—39—Melbourne. William H. Turner, "Woolwelling" Keen St. Northcote; and Carters' and Drivers' Union, 46 William St.
 76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue, Windsor Post, Dist. No. 8.
 130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Pt.
 235—Sydney. Phillip Norman, 842 Military Road, Noosman, Newtown.
Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Place de l'Entrepot 3.
Bermuda—230—St. George's. Fred C. Taylor, Wainright Cottage.
British Columbia—231—Stewart. Jack O'Shea, Ryan Bldg.
 236—Vancouver. A. Johnson, 552-3 Hastings St.
Canada—31—Howe Sound, B. C. C. Plowden, Plowden Bay.
 84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
 22—Burlington, Ontario. T. M. Waumaly, Jocelyn Bookstore.
 4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
 29—Deseronto, Ontario. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly*.
 45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 84 La Riviere St.
 30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, 143 Kennedy St.
 62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
 85—Oshawa, Ontario. J. Worral, 6½ King St. E.
 102—Amherst, Nova Scotia. Lloyd E. MacPherson, 5 Belmont St.
 124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
 178—Moncton. N. B. Chas. H. McCall, 178 St. George St.
 221—Montreal East. M. M. Campbell, 95 Broadway.
 249—Richmond, Ontario. Ernest Armstrong, R.D. 2.
 250—Sault Ste. Marie. James McDonald, 504 Queen St. E.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars, Smallwood Bldg.
Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
 156—Ancon. Arthur Houghton, Box 418.
China—222—Tientsin. Dr. George W. Twomey, 43 Rue de France.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Domingues, 9 Cerro.
 175—Miranda, Oriente. Volney L. Held.
Egypt—173—Khartoum, Sudany. W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs.
Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.
Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
 70—La Ceiba. Jos Buckley Taylor.
India—197—Calcutta. W. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
 136—Tampico, Tamps. Jack Hester, care of T. D. E. Humpo, Apartado 238.
 223—Mazatlan, Sin. Paul L. Horn, Hotel de France, Apartado 102.
Navy—71—U. S. Arizona. Elmer E. McLean.
 140—U. S. Shawmut. J. D. Montgomery.
Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.
Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS



Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure Magazine* by Our Staff of Experts



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.
2. Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.
3. No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.
5. Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do not write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

- 1-3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
- 14-17. Asia. In Four Parts
- 18-25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey
27. Asia Minor
- 28-30. Balkans. In Three Parts.
31. Scandinavia
32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
33. Great Britain
- 34-36. South America. In Three Parts
37. Central America
38. Mexico. In Two Parts
- 40-46. Canada. In Seven Parts

47. Alaska
48. Baffinland and Greenland
- 49-54. Western U. S. In Six Parts
- 55-58. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
- 59-64. Eastern U. S. In Six Parts
- Radio
- Mining and Prospecting
- Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
- Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
- Tropical Forestry
- Aviation
- Army Matters, United States and Foreign
- American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
- Standing Information

Opportunities in New Zealand

THEY'RE all about you in, on and under the ground:

Question:—"I am writing to you for information regarding the general working conditions in New Zealand for a single man, especially farming and mining.

I would also appreciate any information you could give me regarding prospects for homesteading and the requirements of your homesteading laws.

I am at present a sergeant in the United States Army, and will be due for discharge the last of June. It is my intention to come to New Zealand when I am discharged if conditions are promising in your country."—RENATO CERRUTO, Manila, P. I.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—I see no reason why you should not come on over to New Zealand after you get your discharge. This is a country well worth seeing—and if you come and taste of its sweet waters you will forget all about any other spot on earth. This is the life—this is the country. The working conditions over here are ideal—because it is an ideal country, with good labor laws and a free-living, genial people, splendidly independent, not shackled as are your ancient countries.

If you have a little money in your pouch and possess a willingness to get down to the business of making a living by your own effort—well, here's the country that gives such a young man a chance. New Zealand is essentially a producing country, whether on or under the earth.

A man with some knowledge of mining has the chance of all chances over here, for New Zealand is a wonderland of mineral wealth, the surface only of which has been scratched so far, comparatively. We have gold, silver, scheelite, iron-sand and even a suspicion of oil for prospectors to go after, aided by a mining department that is ready to help by bonus and subsidy.

For details of our land laws you should write to the Minister of Lands, Wellington, New Zealand, and he will forward particulars. I don't quite get you about homesteading. Sounds big. We are breaking up our big holdings—runs or ranches or homesteads—so as to give the small settler a chance to get on the land. And that is costing a little bit of money. On that phase, you had better inspect on the spot.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Highland Pistols

SCARCER than hen's teeth:

Question:—"I am asking you if you know anything of Highland pistols and if it is possible to secure a pair. I understand they are flint-locks with no trigger guard, having metal stocks, the butt of which is curled like a ram's horn, and has a metal part for cleaning the vent and a tang or tongue for fastening to the belt."—GEO. G. WALLACE, Columbus, Ga.

Answer, by Mr. Barker:—I suppose I know as much about "Highlanders" as is to be known. Obviously the limits of a letter are too small for an article on the same.

In "Firearms in American History," by Prof. Charles Winthrop Sawyer, (which may be obtained from the author, 41 Humphreys St., Boston, for \$3.75) and which is the best work of its kind ever written, both as to matter and illustrations, you will find a brief account of Highlanders—pages 183, 184, 185, a list of about one hundred makers thereof on pages 185, 186, 187, 188, with markings and dates, and a very fine full-page half-tone of one on page 189.

You will also find a drawing of one on page 84, numbered 2112, of the 1922, 500-page illustrated

catalog of Francis Bannerman's Sons, 501 Broadway, N. Y., which may be obtained by sending fifty cents to them. This pair has been sold some years ago, and so far as I know they have no others.

Major Pitcairn opened the Revolution with a pair. They were taken by the Americans, together with his horse—they being in his saddle holsters—and were given to General Israel Putnam, and given by his nephew to the museum at Lexington, where they now are.

Your description is all right. There is a "picker" screwed into the butt between the ram's horns for cleaning the touch-hole. And a "belt hook" on the left-hand side, as was frequent in military pistols. The mechanism differs from that of the regular flint-lock, the sear extending through the lock-plate as in a Migulet, save that the main spring is inside like the flint-lock and not outside, like the Migulet. The weapon is entirely of metal, sometimes steel and sometimes bronze.

There are some eight or nine varieties, all of which may be seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and nowhere else completely, so far as I know. They were made later in percussion locks. Few collections have more than one; many have none. There has been but one that I remember of at any auction sale of arms in fifteen years—thirty sales—and that brought about fifty-five dollars at a sale where everything went for about one-half the usual auction price.

I should say it would be very, very difficult to obtain a pair. I should not know where to go. If I were looking for them I should authorize Mr. Sumner Healey of 686 Lexington Ave., New York, to find me a pair abroad, giving him *carte blanche* on price up to three hundred. Mr. Healey has, or had, one of the very earliest with the snaphaunce lock (that is to say, with separate frizzen and sliding pan-cover)—I know of but one other of these in America—which he asks or asked five hundred dollars for, and that did not seem to me an undue price. I have seen and handled this piece.

The only possibility, I repeat, in my opinion is to place an order with all dealers, and I should not expect to get them, if at all, for less than two hundred or three hundred dollars.

Dealers are, so far as I know them—otherwise than the two mentioned:

Stephen Van Rensselaer, 873 Madison Ave., N. Y.; J. Theodore Dexter, E. Boone St., Marshalltown, Ia.; Joe Kindig, 336 E. Phil. St., York, Penn.; J. G. Laidacker, Mocanaqua, Penn.; Mr. Carter, Elkhorn, Wisc.; F. E. Ellis, 30 Elm Place, Webster Groves, Mo.

Customs of Central Europe

FEUDAL rights, serfdom, public whippings:

Question:—"1. At what period did the feudal system flourish most highly in central Europe?

2. What were the rights of the feudal lord or baron?

3. Did not a privilege known as maiden rights exist under feudal rule?

4. I have heard that until 1889 or 1890 there was in Germany a law which permitted a man to whip his wife. Is this true? If so, were there any limitations to his authority?

5. What are some of the marriage customs of Poland, Germany and Austria?

6. I understand that a public whipping was one of the punishments by law formerly in use in the countries of central Europe. In what manner was this done? Were women ever whipped?

7. About what is the population of Czecho-Slovakia?

If this letter should be published in *Adventure*, please do not publish my name."—R. E. H., Cross Plains, Tex.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—It is only once in a blue moon that I get a letter like yours, in which the questions are put clearly and concisely. Although your order is a large one, I will try to give you all the information you want.

1. The opinions of the historians differ on this subject. At the time the feudal system was in flower, the territory which I cover was, with the exception of Poland, all part of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." For this reason I must cite German sources, and from these, as the best, the works of Prof. Mommsen.

Feudal princes were those who owned the land in the near vicinity of their castles and resident towns and who had leased this land to the peasants. These people were called *Leibeigene* which means that they were owned soul and body by their lord. They were really slaves. Not only the princes and knights, but also the *clerus*, the priests, were feudal barons.

There is no set period during which the system was in effect. It started in the thirteenth century, in some parts of Germany even sooner, and did not end until after the Reformation and in Prussia during the reign of Frederick the Great.

IN AUSTRIA Joseph the second, son of Maria Theresa, put an end to the system. That's official and history. Truth, however, is the fact that it still existed in Austria until 1866 and in south Germany as late as 1895 in some form or other. We even have a form of this system here in our United States—the famous "padrone system" of the Italian immigrant laborer.

2. The rights of the feudal lords were many, and those of the poor people none. As stated above, the master owned the body of his servants, and they had to follow him through his many wars of aggression. They were not armed with a sword, but carried a halberd.

The feudal lord not only owned the land on which the peasants lived, but also the cottages built thereon, the cattle and farming-implements. He owned a certain part of the crops, a tribute known as *Robot* and in later centuries—the sixteenth and seventeenth—as the *Zehnt*, the "tenth," because he was then entitled to a tenth of all income. This tribute varied in different parts of the country and was paid in kind, including grain, hay, animals, eggs, butter, vegetables, etc.

First of all there was a law, called "maiden right," which permitted a maiden of good character to ask the judges that a criminal sentenced to death be given her in marriage, which act, after having been solemnized by the church, set aside the verdict and freed the culprit.

I find that in 1579 in Saxony during the reign of August a murderer named Martin Hugert escaped death because a maiden asked that he be united with her in marriage. A similar case happened in 1606 during the reign of John George I and still

later in 1725 in a county of Suabia. The histories of the old German cities are full of such stories, and as my library contains numerous volumes I am quite certain that I could cite several hundred. I have picked the above at random.

There is also a second interpretation of "maiden rights."

4. Your informant was quite correct. The husband had what was termed the "right of light punishment," but I fail to find an instance where he was ever convicted if he stretched the meaning of "light." In fact it was not until 1892 that this right was taken away from the husband in Bavaria.

5. The marriage customs vary in all counties. You must bear in mind that central Europe is a large territory with people ethnographically as distant from one another as the poles. I can not within this letter give you all the information you want, but will touch lightly upon some of them.

IN GERMANY the young man—I am speaking of the peasants, and I am having a certain part of Germany in mind—will appear at the Winter spinning-night gatherings and pick out his intended. There will be a short courtship, and with the old people making the arrangements the wedding date will be set. In the Catholic parts of Germany the wedding will be preceded by three announcements from the pulpit which are given at varying periods. In other parts of the country the new furniture of the couple will be loaded on a wagon and with beribboned horses and gaily decorated wheels will be making the rounds of the whole neighborhood.

In Poland other customs prevail. I would suggest that you look these matters up in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* if there is one available in your neighborhood.

6. There were different manners in which public whipping was carried out. In some cases the "nine-tailed" cat was used, in others whips made from birch strips or twigs. In many towns the public executioner did the whipping; in others the populace formed two ranks, and the culprit had to run through, everybody taking a whack at him.

Women, although I know of cases that have been cited, were punished in a different manner from whipping. It is a curious fact that the women of the middle ages incurred the disfavor of the authorities by either lax morals or pointed, too pointed, tongues. The punishment meted out was severe, but I find no record of whipping.

7. The population of Czecho-Slovakia is about fourteen millions, sixty per cent. of which are of Slavic races, thirty-seven per cent. German and the remainder Magyars and in small part Ruthenians and Poles.

Now that I have told you as much as I could in a letter, I am going to request a favor of you. If you write again, and I hope you will, please adhere to "Ask Adventure" rules. In a letter such as yours, where many questions are asked and a long reply is anticipated, there is no room for a small envelop and a stamped one at that. We want a self-addressed envelop to get your correct address, but the stamps should not be attached, so that we might use them on containers large enough to get you your order. I am returning your envelop so that you can make use of it. I couldn't.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

About Six States, Western Section No. One

THE subjoined monograph, printed on hard paper, may be obtained without charge upon application to its author, Mr. E. E. Harriman, 2903 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Be sure to enclose a self-addressed envelop and two cents in stamps, *not* attached:

SECTION No. One of the West, "Ask Adventure" Department, has an extent seldom realized by its correspondents. Herein are facts regarding it.

Total area of the six States is 547 miles greater than that of all States having salt-water ports, from Maine to Louisiana inclusive, with Ohio and West Virginia added for good measure, the grand total of the 21 States being 622,623 square miles, against 623,170.

Section No. One begins at 109° west longitude and touches 124°44' west longitude. Its southernmost point is 31°20' north latitude, and its northernmost rests on 49° north latitude.

Its altitude varies from 276 feet below sea level to 14,501 feet above. It contains some of the driest spots in the western hemisphere and some of the wettest. It holds the record for succession of crops on the same ground, three crops a year having been raised in Imperial. It can show the record for Summer heat in Death Valley and Yuma. It has the coldest average weather on some of its peaks.

In these six States are found the greatest deposits of mineral salts of certain kinds known on earth. Also the greatest known depth of alluvial soils of kindly nature.

IN THESE six States are more minerals of monetary value than in any other six that can be selected from the Union. In them are more acres of vacant land now worthless, except for minerals, than in any other six States, barring out Texas.

In these six are more board feet of timber, now standing, than in any other six. They hold more rivers where commercial fishing can be profitably employed, than any other six States.

Within the six States is found a wider range of agricultural and horticultural products than in any other six.

The inhabitants of the six States hail from more other States of our country, than in any other six States.

Within these six States are found a greater diversity of natural beauty, utility, curiosity and prehistoric interest than in any other six States of the Union.

Within the six lie ocean ports that handle, in three States, more tonnage of freights than the whole country shipped and received by way of such ports when California, Oregon and Washington first began building ports, under American ownership. These three States have 1,250 miles of coast-line and two of the world's finest inland seas—Puget Sound and the Bay of San Francisco.

In the six States are situated the greatest oil-fields known and proven, as well as those promising enormous developments.

The potential hydro-electric power of the six is enormous.

The increase in values, due to the development of irrigation, in these six States will eventually make

the national debt look like the spendings of a Scotch miser. The exploitation of mineral lands now idle will add tremendous sums to valuation. Reforestation of cut-over lands will restore billions of lost values.

In short, Western United States, Section No. One, can brag by offering the Federal statistics, geological reports, agricultural, horticultural and hydrographic surveys, Forest Service data and other Governmental documents. Lies are not needed to prove the case that it is *some size* in a multitude of meanings.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

"Atolls of the Sun"

HAPPY isles, once of the blest, but now o'ershadowed with a portent "as sad as an island heart on schooner day:"

Question:—"I am writing you to ask your assistance in obtaining information with regard to the South Sea Islands.

I am now engaged in writing a play, the locale of which is a small island either in the Paumotu or Marquesas group, never visited by whites. For my purpose this island must be inhabited by a race of peaceful people whose women are handsome and whose men are straight, upstanding and fine. They should be cannibalistic or at least the remnants of a cannibalistic race who are not practising the rite openly because of a ban placed by a white Government. They should, however, disregard the governmental ban while in the throes of a religious frenzy.

Will you kindly let me know whether such a combination is possible and where? I would like to know also something of the inhabitants, marriage customs, mode of living, religion, superstitions, and their mythology, also their commerce. Will you kindly send me a list of books that will help me in my work?

I would also like to know something of their homes, furnishings, etc. If possible, I would like to see some pictures of their homes, both interior and exterior. If you have such pictures I would like very much to buy them from you if you will let me know how much they are so that I can remit the cost to you. Any other information that you can send me will be appreciated, and I shall be very grateful to you for your assistance."—ARTHUR M. BRILANT, New York.

Answer, by Mr. C. Brown, Jr.:—One thing was impressed for all time upon me when breaking into print: Never should one write of places and people with whom he is not intimately acquainted. Jack London, who always did remain the friend and critic of that hard-pressed legion of unarrived, even until the big moment he took to that mystic trail which leads west of sunset, not once let up stressing a fact of vital import. He was always emphasizing that the men and women making good in this strenuous game of writing were doing so primarily because they write only of persons and localities actually known to them.

It was back in our American pre-war days of 1915, a few hours after I had descended from a dust-covered train in Summer New York City, that

another writing man of fame remarked in his casual way that I *might* sell stories so long as they had to do with those weird and distant equatorial places I have known so long and so well. So that it was only five or six weeks when Arthur S. Hoffman accepted "Red Flannel," my first story, for *Adventure*. Then I began to write beach tales just for this magazine of bone and flesh and blood.

Let me ask, Mr. Playwright—does not the essence of the two paragraphs above hold fast and true among those men and women who write so successfully for Broadway?

Now to get at the heart of your query. An island "never visited by whites." An isle of powdered coral and ever-whispering coco-palms. An islet inhabited by a "race of peaceful people" that take to gorging themselves with human flesh while "in the throes of a religious frenzy."

Oh, you do ask me for so much! Has it never occurred to you that the Inevitable White Man has been everywhere from my siren islands of the southeastern Pacific to the wild, untamed hills of far Melanesia?

"But surely one island has escaped him," you think as a million others do. "He can not have been to all of them."

COME now while we have time to Papeete harbor in quiet, unstandardized Tahiti. Tahiti is my dearly beloved Island of Procrastination. In this sweet, kind land where the time is either Spring or Summer we do not always do today the things we can put off for a week of tomorrows. We folk of the easy-going South Sea Islands are quite content to sit and watch the golden dream of Tahiti go by. We shall sit and watch until the precious dream fades out forevermore. . . .

Most Paumotu and Marquesan voyages begin at this merry capital of French Oceania.

Everywhere alongside the Quai du Commerce in Papeete are small white trading-schooners, cutters and launches. Strange craft that carry stranger cargoes, they are tied up to trees, eighteenth-century cannon and iron rails on the red-gold flamboyant-shaded waterfront. Across the wide, cool avenue are the trading-stores, Chinese shops, Government buildings and residences. A lying-in lagoon found only in warm, blue seas south o' the rim.

A two-mast schooner, the *Hinano*, which is "Flower of the Pandanus," will take the sea this very afternoon, in another hour at the latest. Four days this departure has been put off; but at last the *Hinano* will slip out through the break in Papeete lagoon; that is, if her crew is still of a going-to-sea mind.

All through this long, long tropic afternoon sweethearts—indisputably pretty dancing-girls from the out-of-Papeete districts—of Captain Jim's brown, barefoot crew have been hula-hulaing in the short, sweet grass of the quay. Now the accordeons have been put away and these girls are weeping on the shoulders of their deep-water men. All too quickly must these lovers sail from them and the joy they can give—ever and beyond the sparkling horizon, on and on and on, ever onward to the mysterious, pearl-strewn Paumotu and the sad, depopulated Marquesas.

At the quay are relatives and friends of the deck passengers. Everybody is weeping and embracing.

But do not let this touching display of island

grief darken our voyage. For by the time the *Hinano* is pitching on the broad expanse of the South Pacific, the passengers and the crew will be quite joyous with laughter. And when the dark purple of night drops on Papeete town, new lovers will already be holding within their arms these passionate hula-hula girls who are now wailing and carrying on as though they and Captain Jim's men are parting until the morning of the resurrection. Will you think it strange that some of these new-found lovers will be rich Chinamen? Polynesian girls forget so soon!

Three o'clock! Captain Jim has screamed his last orders. The redwood plank which connected the *Hinano* and the Quai du Commerce a few short minutes ago lies now on the sun-blistered deck. Up forward pigs and chickens are clamoring for their proud owners who, in the long days of burning voyage, will squander on them the sort of love and affection that is given to little children. Our traveling-companions, natives and half-castes, Chinamen and Europeans, are sitting on the hot deck, like a shipload of tailors. Each passenger, as well as every member of the crew, is hung with two or three wreaths of Tiare blossoms, the virgin-white love flower of all Tahiti Island.

Tied along the bow of the ship are dozens of bunches of bananas and long strings of green-skinned oranges. This *Hinano* food will ripen beneath a hot, implacable sky. On every side of us hang palm-leaf baskets that are filled with mangoes of gold. . . . The *Hinano* is now beating across the blue-and-mauve lagoon, past Motu-Uta, the little quarantine islet with its toy houses and trees. A quarter of an hour and we'll glide through the passage in the ever smoking barrier reef.

BY NOW almost all of us have broken into song. Singing with us is the white trade-surf out on the reef. The song that has come to our lips was written by the late Pomare, who was the very last of the gay Tahitian kings, while the heart and the mind of him were merry with coconut-brand—

"E manuru a vau!"
("I am so happy!")

Just that single line, over and over and over. We shall be singing it hours after the mountain range that is my green, sunny Tahiti has sunk like a stone beneath the circle of the sea-horizon. We Tahiti Islanders never tire of our beloved king song. While no island voyage, not even the fifteen-mile run over to Moorea, the Land of the Lizard Men, is ever complete without it.

Such strange beaches as you and I will tread in the next month. Fakarava. Hikueru. Takaroa. Nukuhiva. Hiva-Oa.

Roll these names on your tongue, you playwright of daring—you who would substitute for Old Manhattan a brown-and-green island that has never felt the tread of a white foot; you who would create sea-women of such unearthly beauty that your New York brothers would consign to the scrap-heap forever and twenty-four hours their pampered darlings of this give-me civilization; you who would plunge a "race of peaceful people" into a frenzy of religious fervor before they filled their bellies with human meat. Roll those names on your tongue, I say to you, Mr. Playwright. Still once again.

What do these places of the far South Seas suggest?

"Adventure, Wealth and Romance," you respond.

Yes, these three are there. But overshadowing them is something as sad as an island heart on schooner day.

A few days now, and you shall gaze your fill on all that the Inevitable White Man has accomplished in one short half-century. So that if you are of the same spirit and temperament as I, your heart will sob with anguish at the things that not all the combined effort of his children can undo. For the hallmark of his grasping civilization must remain always a blot on those islands of fairy structure. Oh, if only the South Sea Islander had not heard of the Inevitable White Man's god! If only that simple, trusting child of the sun had not tried to still his thirst with an alien drink!

EVERYWHERE among these blazing "atolls of the sun" you will mark that Greed and Selfishness, the two inseparable handmaidens of Commerce, have reduced a splendid race to virtual serfdom. At Hikuera you will hear of how famous diving men and women plunge year after year in hopeless despair to oyster beds fathoms deep. These divers must pay with precious pearls and good shell the insatiable trading-companies that have fed and clothed them at ruinous prices during those governmental-enforced periods of long South Sea time when this lagoon was closed to diving.

And if the *Hinano* is not too anxious to spread her clean wings and fly below the dazzling diamond-white horizon, there will break soon enough in your presence the verbal strife of creeds. . . . Oh, I tell you, Mr. Playwright, you will understand quite readily when some old Paumotuian confides in you in a flaming sundown that his heart is lonely for the cast-out gods of his fathers.

(How long and long ago happened the thing I am describing, and how utterly unbelievable it does seem to me after all my years of earth-questing and warfare—that South Sea night of stars and wind and moon when, in an ecstasy of suspense and with one of us guiding the other by the hand, a girl of island bronze and I crept through a moon-silvered jungle to the threshold of a secret temple. No more can I recall how long she and I looked on an entire island at "heathen prayer." But always there will stand in the fore of my picture-book mind the little "bird-cage" house above the sandy sweep of a desolate beach far away behind us. In this structure of bamboo and palm a missionary, waiting for the lands that lie outside the eternal ring of the sea, made ready his annual report. "All of the natives," he wrote to the mission board in the dear homeland, "have now been won to Christianity.")

After the *Hinano* has done with discharging passengers and trade-goods Captain Jim will press on to Nukuhiva and Hiva-Oa. These two Marquesan islands are in the "Land of the Big Fleet." You and I will go to them with a Tahitian crew that is wedded to a song that consists of but one line—

"E mau ruru a vau!"

"At last! I shall see Typee valley," your voice goes gladly out across this sea of mid-afternoon sapphire. "I shall make Typee the locale of my play."

Once, back in the happy Forties, Typee was idyllic. But this was before the Inevitable White Man brought his Chinese plantation laborers to these vernal islands. And it was before the advent of

opium, alcohol, disease and leprosy. So that should you persist in hurrying away to Typee Valley, where Herman Melville was the love-prisoner of a comely Marquesan girl through swift-flying weeks of indescribable happiness, you will see showing here and there in the heavy undergrowth the Marquesan *paepae*, or stone dwelling platform—but nothing more. A long, long time ago the golden dream of Typee faded to dark. . . .

Let me read from this book by a wandering Scotsman, he who is now sleeping his long, unbroken sleep, out "under the wide and starry sky," on a hillside above the uplands of Vailama, in primitive Samoa—Robert Louis Stevenson:

"The thought of death," he wrote, while living several months in the Marquesas, "is uppermost in the mind of the Marquesan. It would be strange if it were otherwise. The race is perhaps the handsomest extant. Six feet is about the middle height of males; they are strongly muscled, free from fat, swift in action, graceful in repose; and the women, though fatter and duller, are still comely animals. To judge by the eye, there is no race more viable; and yet death reaps them with both hands.

"When Bishop Dordillon first came to Tai-o-hae he reckoned the inhabitants at many thousands; he was but newly dead, and in the same bay Stanislae Moanatinini counted on his fingers eight residual natives. Or take the valley of Hapaa, known to readers of Herman Melville under the grotesque misspelling of 'Hapar.' The tribe of Hapa is said to have been some four hundred when the smallpox came and reduced them by one-fourth. Six months later a woman developed tubercular consumption. The disease spread like fire about the valley, and in less than a year two survivors, a man and a woman, fled from this new-created solitude.

"When I first heard this story the date staggered me; but I am now inclined to think it possible. Early in the year of my visit, for example, or late the year before, a first case of phthisis appeared in a household of seventeen persons, and by the month of August, when the tale was told me, one soul survived, and that was a boy who had been absent at his schooling.

"And depopulation works both ways, the doors of death being set wide open and the door of birth almost closed. Thus in the half-year ending 1888 there were twelve deaths and but one birth in the district of Hatiheu. Seven or eight more deaths were to be looked for in the ordinary course; and M. Aussel, the observant gendarme, knew of but one likely birth. At this rate it is no matter of surprise if the population in that part should have declined in forty years from six thousand to less than four hundred—which are the estimated figures. And the rate of decline must have been accelerated towards the end."

TIME was in the Marquesas when civil war and cannibalism were the two principal outdoor sports. Long ago the French put a stop to all of this. Even so, despite the fact that in 1850 there were fully fifty thousand Marquesans in the nine islands of the group, the population is now almost extinct, there being less than two thousand today. And these inhabitants are broken in health and spirit. To them remain a few years at the most. After that—death!

Oh, — the Inevitable White Man!

How impossible he has made for you, Mr. Playwright, the setting of your play in these disease-doomed Marquesas. And you can not lay it out in the Paumotu, where the natives would not openly disregard a "governmental ban." Besides they never did cultivate a taste for the flesh of their fellow creatures, you must hold in mind.

You would know something about the "inhabitants, marriage customs, mode of living, religion, superstitions, and their mythology, also their commerce." Between now and the day the *Hinano* picks up the Paumotu Islands and their painted fish, I shall prepare a list of South Sea books that will help you. In this list will be:

"The Cruise of the Snark," by Jack London; "The Log of the Snark," by Charmian London; "White Shadows in the South Seas" and "Atolls of the Sun," by Frederick O'Brien; "Tahiti Days," by Hector MacQuarrie; "Two Years in Southern Waters," by Charlotte Cameron; "In the Track of the Trades," by Lewis R. Freeman; "Typee," by Herman Melville; "In the South Seas," by Robert Louis Stevenson; and "The Cruise of the Dream Ship," by Ralph Stock.

Speaking of photographs, I have here in my California home some unusual South Sea plates—but these I am reserving for the book of breadfruit and coconut atolls that I shall write shortly. For almost at San Francisco now is the joyous steamer morning on which I shall terminate forevermore all these weary long months of self-imposed exile. In my blood is the urge of a Tahitian island and a Tahitian sea. So that I shall watch again the golden dream of Tahiti glide by in my own fruitful Paradise Valley.

You might write for photographs, however, to my good friend George Spitz of the South Sea Islands Curio Store, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands. Mr. Spitz will let you have a price list of his photos, which are exceptionally fine.

But just one thing again: To succeed in the writing game one should write only of places and people actually known to him.

Trapping the Dismal Swamp

WHERE Arctic fur-bearers live side by side with tropical life:

Question:—"Myself and friend are considering a Winter of trapping in the Dismal Swamp, and would like a few pointers in reference to traps, guns, boats and camps.

At what town near by could we get an outfit? Do you think it would be profitable to camp and trap there a season?

Are there many trappers there, and would we require a State license to hunt and trap?

About what time of the Fall season would you advise us to get there?

Any advice will be appreciated."—R. H. KINGSBURY, Sarasota, Fla.

Answer, by Mr. Shannon:—Elizabeth City, N. C., should be the logical city for a base of operations as it lies at the end of the old Dismal Swamp Canal which runs north through the swamp to Norfolk. Incidentally this canal was built thirty-five years before the Erie Canal was completed and eighteen years before the Middlesex, New England's pioneer canal, was opened for use. The Legislature of North Carolina in 1790 authorized its construction.

Steamers also run up the Chowan and Blackwater to Franklin, Va., skirting the western boundary of the swamp from Edenton, N. C.

Near the rivers and streams there are generally strips of swamp-land proper with gum, cypress and juniper forests; and farther back there are semi-swamps and oak and pine flats.

The Pasquotank River, rising in the Dismal swamp, empties into the Albermarle Sound at Elizabeth City and affords a passage into the interior of the swamp-lands.

In these swamps may be found fauna varying from the Canada lynx, with a range reaching the Arctic, to the alligator, whose center of abundance is well within the limits of tropical America.

There is more or less intermittent trapping done all through the section by farmers and their sons; but few follow it for a livelihood. As to traps it would depend largely upon the locality in which you decided to work, and such equipment may be purchased locally.

A light-draft motor boat would probably be the ideal vessel for such a trip, although personally I have always preferred a canoe. You would have to get a State hunting-license to hunt unless you confined your activities to a single county in either Virginia or North Carolina.

The easiest way for you to get there would be to pick up passage out of Tampa on one of the coast-wise vessels running to Norfolk. Then outfit in Norfolk and head down the canal until you found a suitable place to tie up for the Winter. I think Elizabeth City would be a good place, because if you wanted to drift south you will find five thousand square miles of swamp-land within the State of North Carolina—all of it with trapping possibilities.

You will find deer, bear, coon, opossum, muskrat, mink, otter in the coastal plain regions of both Virginia and North Carolina.

You will also find an occasional diamond-back; but, being from Florida, that shouldn't worry you much.

As to the profit possible in such a trip as you plan, it depends too much on the individual, how much he knows and how hard he works for me to volunteer an opinion. It can be did—the question is can you DO it? That's for you to decide.

Viking Longships

WHERE to find out about them:

Question:—"I have read with interest the various stories in *Adventure* of the deeds of Swain and his Norsemen.

I wonder if you have at hand any information regarding the longships they used. I have many times in my mind speculated upon the size and kind of a ship they used.

What lengths were they? How were they made, and what equipment used? Have you any sketches of one? I mean any you could send me?

Where might I find a good description of them—photos, etc.?"—A. B. HITCHCOCK, Kiefer, Okla.

Answer, by Mr. Rieseberg:—The information you desire may be obtained by addressing a letter to the Curator, Division of Technology, United States National Museum, Washington, D. C., who is in charge of models of such vessels and who, I am sure, will gladly furnish you any information on the subject.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

HERE are three songs from the manuscript of Mr. R. W. Phillips to which I referred in the issue of July 30. The first is a curious little song, particularly in its use of the short but effective line without rime at the end of each stanza. I'd like to know more about it.

The Hunter's Death

Ye hunters brave and bold, I pray attend
To this relation; hear what I have seen.
'Twas of a hunter bold;
'Twill make your blood run cold
To hear the story told
How he suffered there.

To hunt when he was young was his delight,
And when to manhood came, his favorite,
To hunt the fallow deer,
The roebuck and the bear,
The turkey, coon, and hare,
With smaller game.

As people settled round on hill and dale
No venison he found; his hunting failed.
He went in forty-nine
Toward the northern line;
It was his whole design
To hunt the grove.

And now comes on the day that was his last;
Old Boreas blew away an awful blast.
It did both rain, hail and snow;
The stormy winds did blow;
They chilled his nature so
Poor man was lost.

All in the drifting snow laid himself down;
No further could he go; there was he found.
His powder so complete
Was strewed from head to feet
That the vermin might not eat
His body there.

You'd wish to know his name and where he's from,
And of what stock he came and where he's born?
He's of as noble a race
As any in the place—
His name 'twas John Lomace
Born in Westfield.

The second song belongs to a group that finds humor in the very magnitude of its exaggerations. Probably many of you can send in others of this type. It is called

A Hunting Song

As I rode out a-hunting,
It was on a cold Winter's day.
The trees were all in blossom;
It was in the month of May, May,
It was in the month of May.

I tracked the herd of deer, sir;
I tracked it through the snow;
I tracked it to the waterside
Where under it did go, go,
Where under it did go.

I loaded up my pistols
And under water went;
To pick me out a good fat buck.
It was my whole intent, 'tent,
It was my whole intent.

I being under water
Five hundred feet or more,
I fired off my pistols;
The cannons they did roar, roar,
The cannons they did roar.

I fired all among them.
By chance I did kill one;
The rest they stuck their bristles up
And at me they did come, come,
And at me they did come.

My body became so riddled
A bullfrog might jump through,
And by the king of my life
My naked sword I drew, drew,
My naked sword I drew.

I fought them with my naked sword;
Five hours I held the play;
Ten thousand good fat bucks I killed;
The rest they ran away, way,
The rest they ran away.

I bent my gun a circle;
I shot all round the hill,
And out of four and twenty
Five hundred I did kill, kill,
Five hundred I did kill.

I picked up my venison,
Went on the hill so high,
Where I could stand upon the ground
And touch the very sky, sky,
And touch the very sky.

As I stood gazing round me
The sun came rolling by.
I picked up my venison,
Jumped on as it passed by, by,
Jumped on as it passed by.

I rode all round this world, sir;
I rode upon the moon,
And I arrived safe at home
The very next day at noon, noon,
The very next day at noon.

The money I received, sir,
For venison and for skin;
I took it to a forty-foot barn—
It would not all go in, in,
It would not all go in.

I had money out at interest,
Loaned money to the rich,
And he who will tell a bigger lie
Is a lying ———.

The third Mr. Phillips calls

Old Darby

As Darby walked out one moonshiny night,
(*Down in the queeny, sing queeny conarey!*)
He stole a gray mare and she proved to be white,
(*Sing netroup te naughtroup te nellow!*)
He stole a gray mare and she proved to be white,
(*Sing hether con tether con cante con tellow!*)

As old Darby walked up the gallows so high,
(*Down in the queeny, sing queeny conarey!*)
He saw one of his countrymen a-riding by,

(*Sing netroup te naughtroup te nellow!*)
He saw one of his countrymen a-riding by,
(*Sing hether con tether con cante con tellow!*)

"I send very great love to my father and mother,
(*Down in the queeny, sing queeny conarey!*)
But much greater love to my sister and brother,
(*Sing netroup te naughtroup te nellow!*)
But much greater love to my sister and brother,
(*Sing hether con tether con cante con tellow!*)

"You may tell them you've seen old Darby again,
(*Down in the queeny, sing queeny conarey!*)
You may tell them old Darby's gone to heaven in
a sling,
(*Sing netroup te naughtroup te nellow!*)
You may tell them old Darby's gone to heaven in
a sling,"

(*Sing hether con tether con cante con tellow!*)

SEND all contributions of old songs and all questions about them direct to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

AUGUST 30TH ISSUE

Besides the one complete novel and two complete novelettes mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

A CASE OF SILVER

It all began with a little scheme planned out on the waterfront of New York.

John Webb

QUEER FISH

The town that never got shelled.

Douglas Oliver

THE THREE EGGS

Way of a bird with the air.

F. St. Mars

IROQUOIS! IROQUOIS! A Five-Part Story Part III

Tall Rock captures a black belt.

Hugh Pendexter

IN DEFIANCE OF EUCLID

Davenport struck the snake aside.

Dale Collins

THE WAR OF THE CALIFORNIAS

The time when Michael Foster put on his go-getting clothes.

H. C. Wire



Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain long stories by J. Allan Dunn, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Thomson Burtis, John Webb, E. S. Pladwell, Leonard H. Nason, H. C. Bailey, Joel Townsley Rogers, F. R. Buckley and Georges Surdez; and short stories by Herman Petersen, John Dorman, Raymond S. Spears, Thomas Topham, George E. Holt, J. D. Newsom, Charles Tenney Jackson, F. St. Mars, Clements Ripley, Dale Collins, S. Omar Barker and others; stories of gold-hunting in Australia, viking-faring in Norway, flying on the Border, man-hunting in Haiti, revolting in Mexico, conspiring in Morocco, of land-grabbers in the desert, doughboys on transports, knights-at-arms in medieval France, pearl-divers in the South Seas, moonshiners in the mountain country, Naval aviators on the Potomac, train-robbers in the West, French colonial troopers in Africa, American soldiers in China, traders in the Pacific, adventurers the world around.



Let Kodak Keep the Story

What a chance for a picture! Yes, and your Kodak will make the most of it.

Vacation's fun is Kodak's opportunity.

Autographic Kodaks \$6.50 up

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y., *The Kodak City*

Black Jack

"—that good old licorice flavor"



©1924
AMERICAN
CHICLE CO



FARE ENOUGH